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Knights & Magic

ナイツ
&
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by Amazake No Hisago

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Prologue

私は信じています。
あなたが護られています。



The perilous peaks that divide Zetterlund Continent in two — the Aubigne Mountain Range.

With the tall mountains as the background, at its foot were the plains formed by forest clearings. On the ground that was exposed by brute force was a terrible scene of wreckage lying everywhere. They were cut, burned or pierced by sharp objects, and there were even those shattered by blunt trauma. All of them were seriously twisted out of shape, and impossible to tell how their original form was.

On closer inspection, it should be clear that these wreckage resembles human limbs, broken helmets or other such artifacts. They were originally part of a [humanoid]. But curiously, no matter how hard one searched, two necessary parts of a human body couldn't be found anywhere: [flesh] and [blood]. There were only crystal tissue, Inner Skeleton, armour and the silver nerves laid on top of them — That's right, these parts didn't belong to humans, but wreckage of giant humanoid weapons, [Silhouette Knights] which were forged from machines and magic.

In this place that could be described as the cemetery of giants, apart from the occasional gusts of wind, it was devoid of any movements. As if the very land was silent and surrounded by serenity —

The group of countries on the west of the Zetterlund Continent — the [Western League of Nations, Occident] was embroiled in the devastation of war, an era future scholars called [Western Grand Storm], which dragged many nations into large scale warfare.

The first to sound the war drum was the renown powerhouse of the west, the [Žaloudek Kingdom]. They rampaged through the alliance of several smaller countries, and set their sights on the other great nation in the region, [Kuscheperca Kingdom]. The Žaloudek Kingdom revealed their burning ambition, and launched a large scale invasion.

In the beginning, the Žaloudek Kingdom's tyrannical ways was just seen as the usual skirmishes of the past. As the two countries had similar disputes in the past, they had always been hostile towards each other. However, the situation developed beyond everyone's expectations and the clashes intensified with the scales tilting heavily to one side.

The Žaloudek Kingdom used a never before seen aerial weapons, [Levitate Ships], and powerful new models of Silhouette Knights. Together with tactics that completely overturned the known conventions of warfare, they achieved blitz-like invasion with extraordinary precision. The Kuscheperca Kingdom lost their king which was equivalent to the heart of the nation in the opening battle. Losing the capital pushed the nation to the very brink. Those who rose up in unrelentless defiance was knocked down one by one by the powerful maces of the latest model of Silhouette Knights, the [Tyrant]. The royals who barely escaped the capital was captured in fell swoop by the Levitate Ships waiting for them in the sky. The territory of the kingdom known as Kuscheperca in the past,

would probably be annexed by the Žaloudek Kingdom in the near future — When everyone was certain that this would be the end, the appearance of an unpredictable element changed the entire situation.

A few months after the war started, a group crossed the Aubigne Mountain Range and came to Kuscheperca. They call themselves the [Silver Phoenix Merchants], and stood in the way of Žaloudek Kingdom's wild ambition.

The Silver Phoenix Merchants — Their actual identity was actually the famous organization from Fremmevira Kingdom, the incarnation of violence, the [Silver Phoenix Knights] — They possessed powerful Silhouette Knights that could defeat the Black Knights from Žaloudek Kingdom. The moment they stepped onto the eastern border, they launched a ferocious attack against the Žaloudek Army garrisoned there. Their advance was unstoppable, and succeeded in rescuing the imprisoned Kuscheperca royals, a major setback for Žaloudek Kingdom's schemes. With the Žaloudek Army in disarray, the Silver Phoenix Merchants assisted the remnants of the Kuscheperca army, and provided the plans for the new model of Silhouette Knights, the [Revantier]. They even drew up a plan on how to battle the Levitate Ships.

The infuriated commander in chief of the Žaloudek Army — Cristóbal, decided to mobilize a large number of units to crush the Kuscheperca remnants once and for all. The two sides finally clashed near [Missillier], which was near the eastern borders. After an intense battle that lasted an entire night, the Silver Phoenix Knights and the remnants of the old Kuscheperca army emerged triumphant. They devastated the main forces of the Žaloudek Army, the [Black Skull Knights] and [Steel Wing Knights], and used the momentum to recover the key city of the eastern region, [Fontaine].

The old Kuscheperca army that had been reeling since the fall of their nation regained their vigor after winning a grand victory. The army gathered under the daughter of the late king, Princess [Eleonora Miranda Kuscheperca]. When she was coronated and became queen, she announced to the surrounding countries her intent to rebuild the [New Kuscheperca Kingdom].

C.E. 1282, the Western Grand Storm that appears to be winding up returned to its starting point once again, as the war was headed into the mist which no one could see through. The New Kuscheperca Kingdom who had just emerged victorious for a short time, and the Žaloudek Kingdom that was still formidable despite its defeat — Both nations continued to sharpen their fangs in the dark in order to win the next battle as they wait for the right opportunity.

This place filled with the wreckage of Silhouette Knights was an [airport] used by the enemy for the take off and landing of their [Levitate Ship], which flew by using the mysterious effect of ether.

The huge number of wreckage from giants almost filled up this place that was in no way small. If one looked carefully, they should be able to see the strange features on the wreckage. The armour had many minute similarities, which suggest that all the Silhouette Knights piled here was from the same model. It goes without saying that all these wreckage were from the fallen mass produced models of Žaloudek Kingdom, the[Tyrant]. They were all destroyed during the [battle of Missillier].

The broken wreckage was gathered here because of a [contract] between the [New Kuscheperca Kingdom] and the [Silver Phoenix Knights]. The content of their contract was as follows — [The enemy Silhouette Knights defeated by the Silver Phoenix Knights will be recognized as the property of the Silver Phoenix Knights, as their reward for the battle].

This meant that all these was the property of the Silver Phoenix Knights Knight Commander[Ernesti **【Eru】** Echevarria].

It wasn't possible to line up the heavily damaged wreckage properly, so these inoperable Silhouette Knights were just dumped together in a pile. At best, their only use was melting the steel and reforging them. There was probably just one person in the entire Zetterlund Continent that would be happy to receive these scrap metal. And of course, that person would be Eru who has a unique hobby.

And the subject himself was happily piloting his blue Motor Rad to dig for treasure within the pile of wreckage as tall as a hill. He was using the very first prototype model of Motor Rad, which didn't have any Magius engine, the [Motor Beat] model. He and the Motor Beat was filled with passion as he dismantled the wreckage he unearthed with his nimble hands as he kept digging through the pile.

Moments later, he poked his head out of the pile with a huge amount of wreckage in his hands and said:

"We have dismantled quite a number of spare parts, it's about time to carry them over there."

"Huh — There is already this much!? Eru, you are working too hard!"

When Eru exclaimed happily, a voice of protest came from the other side of the pile. Just like him, she was piloting the Motor Beat model of the Motor Rad. The one who her hands on her hips and chest puffed out was his childhood playmate cum Silver Phoenix Knights Commander's aide [Adeltrud **【Ady】** Olter].

Even though Ady was here to assist Eru, but it was still a laborious task to pilot a Motor Rad and accompany Eru who was completely immersed his dismantling work. She couldn't stand it, but Eru passionately pile the mangled pieces of spare parts onto a shelf and carried it away. This wasn't a task the two of them could handle without using Motor Rad.

They got down from the small mountain of wreckage, and there was another Motor Rad down there doing all sorts of work, inspecting the spare parts brought to him by the other two carefully and sorting them. He was another childhood playmate of Eru, Knightsmith[Batson Termonen].

The dwarf Batson had a burly body. He was about Eru's height, but his built was almost twice as thick. He piloted the Motor Rad customized for craftsmen, [Dwarves Fist], deftly controlling its four arms to inspect the spare parts before

recording it down on paper.

"Batson, how is it going? Here's a new batch."

"Hmm — It's going well. Ah, put the goods over there."

The way he kept working on his task while answering distractedly was a little like Eru. Among Eru's childhood playmate, Batson was also a Silhouette Knights hobbyist that was hard to come by.

After placing the shelf besides him, Eru stopped the Motor Beat. After the sound of compressed air gushing out, the armour on the torso opened and the petite Eru jumped out. He quickly moved towards Batson and looked at the notes he wrote, checking the results. From physical labour to mental work, he would work tirelessly on anything related to robots. Seeing the robot maniac jumping right into his next task, Ady could only shrug, jumped off the Motor Beat and weakly hugged Eru from behind.

"I'm so tired, Eru. I want to rest like this for a while to recover my motivation gauge~"

The way the petite youth fit right into her arms made Ady sighed in satisfaction. Although Motor Rad was capable of all kinds of work, it would using it for extended periods drain significant stamina and mana, which was a

significant burden for the pilot. That might be so, but the training she went through in the pass wasn't so relaxed that she would be exhausted from such a trivial thing. However, this was a different matter, and everyone needed motivation. Eru supported the weight of Ady who was hanging onto him and tidied his messy hair.

"Thank you for your hard work, Ady. Please have a good rest before the inspection results are out. We still need to continue the dismantling work after we're done here."

"Eru is merciless and full of drive as usual..."

Eru didn't seem very concerned about Ady who looked haggard, and dove into the work of picking out spare parts. Ady knew him very well, so she didn't bother him and just hugged on tight. After looking at Eru's work for a while, she asked confusedly:

"Eru, you seemed to be inspecting the same kind spare parts for a while now."

"You can tell? Yes, this might be the core of their technology."

At this moment, Batson who had been comparing all sorts of spare parts with the blueprints in his hand lift his head and said:

"As expected! Hey Eru, look at the blueprints. Right here... It looks the same, this is the same parts, the secret behind that ship flying lies right [here]! "

The blueprint details the core of the Levitate Ship that was captured in Missillier. It was the plans of the secret machine that makes the ship floats, the [Ethereic Levitator].

"Ohh, we have evidence to support our theory now. Maybe we have gotten the invitation to take to the sky!"

Eru stared at the spare part pointed out by Batson. It was found on the wreckages of the Black knights, a device with a crystal stone emitting dim rainbow coloured lights at its core. Eru caressed the device with his fingers, a smile gradually forming on his face. He was always filled with joy when he discover new functions and technology. Especially if it was related to Levitate Ships, and even more so for Silhouette Knights.

"The [crystal] thought to have no value in the pass... which means, someone had found a value in them. Just what secret does it holds? I wish someone can answer me."

"Eru is showing a devious smile again..."

What would Eru do if he grasp the secret of the crystal? It was clear without needing to sound it out. Ady and Batson could only looked at each other with a resigned expression. At this moment, a voice shouting their names loudly came from the other side of the hill of wreckage:

"Hey, Silver boy and your little friend, where did you go!? Did you get buried here!? Really, piling these wreckages here is such a waste, just melt them all and reforge them."

"Hmm, over here Boss, over here — "

When he heard the response, the chief Knightsmith of the Silver Phoenix Knights — Boss [David Hepken] made his way over the wreckage hill painstakingly. David found Eru and his friends surrounded by spare parts at the foot of the hill, and sighed deeply:

"... Ho, you seem to be having a great time."

"Yes, because they look really, really ~ ~ delicious, I want to gobble them all up faster! "

"Like giving catnip to a cat, giving these to the silver boy will hit just the right spot... I was wondering why you lot are holing up here. Sigh, I guessed as much."

Seeing Eru's dreamy smile as he stared at the wreckage passionately, the Boss could only shake his head. Eru was too energetic, and there was no need to worry about him. To him, this pile of wreckage was a mountain of treasure and a sumptuous meal. As he expected, Eru was engrossed in analyzing the wreckage.

Eru's action might look as if he gives no regards to his position, but he wasn't just running amok, driven by his hobby. Putting it nicely, Knight Commander Echevarria was an authority in Silhouette Knights technology, but in actual fact, he was just a Silhouette Knight nerd. He expressed that — he was doing this in order to investigate the technology behind the Žaloudek Army. That might be so, it wasn't fine for a Knight Commander to abandon his duties and dive into a pile of junk metal.

"The investigation might be important, but don't push yourself. If you strain your body and fall ill, things will become troublesome. And the development of the Revantier is done for now as we move into mass production phase, so there's no need to be so hasty."

Like what the boss said, the testing and debugging of the latest model of machine, the [Revantier] had been completed. The results showed that it was ready to be mass producing, and it's now heading into that phase. Both military and civilian workshops around Fontaine were operating at full capacity. Although the craftsmen were burdened with massive workload, their faces were cheerful and morale was high because of the founding of their new nation. Normally, the Silver Phoenix Merchants in charge of its design should become more free. But that didn't apply to Eru at all.

"I understand but I'm definitely not doing this only for the sake of sating my curiosity for the technology that Žaloudek possess especially because that weapon called Levitate Ship was never seen before not only can it fly but it also has the capability of transporting Silhouette Knights and is a serious threat analyzing and using them in live combat will benefit us too most importantly I'm very happy that I can contribute to the advancement of all mankind and I want to better everyone's life so I want to study and learn everything from start to finish as soon as possible."

"Alright alright, I get it. How long are you going to do this? "

"Well... I think I'm about to grasp the core of the secret. Ah, please don't worry. Once I know what that wonderful secret is, I won't keep it to myself and will share the details with everyone!"

Seeing Eru saying all that excitedly with no intention of stopping, the Boss finally gave in:

"Oh... Oh, hmm, ahh, I get it, don't say any more. Just do as you want without exhausting yourself!"

The Boss also knew that it was useless to say anything to Eru when he was like this, they had spent so much time together after all. Fortunately, their enemy,

the Žaloudek Kingdom didn't make any movement during this period. The situation would remain unchanged for the time being, so there wouldn't be any issue — The boss made this decision in half resignation.

While Eru and the others had an enjoyable time during these days, on the other side far away from Fontaine, something happened in the (Old) Kuscheperca Kingdom capital, [Delvincourt].

This city that fell into the Žaloudek Kingdom's hand in the opening battle was now the symbol of their rule over Kuscheperca, where the [Central governance house] was situated. It was once the capital of a nation, so there were all sorts of facilities within the city. The workshop zone was one of them, with plenty of large workshops that could maintain and build Silhouette Knights, a strategic location that supports a nation's military functions.

The soldiers and Knightsmith of the Žaloudek Army scurry about by the feet of the Tyrant under maintenance. A man who seemed out of place walked over casually amidst the hustle and bustle. It wasn't just anyone, but the chief of the research and development workshop of Žaloudek Kingdom, [Horacio Collazo]. He walked about the workshop to inspect ongoing works, and gave all sorts of instructions to the subordinates around him.

"...Good, just do it this way right here. Yes, something like that would do. I will leave the rest to you, I have an important project in the workshop that requires my attention."

After the founding of the New Kuscheperca Kingdom, or more specifically — after their defeat in Missillier, the Žaloudek Kingdom has been hastening to replenish the forces they had lost, and research ways to deal with the anti-Levitate Ship weapons used against them. If they don't solve this problem, they might completely lose the advantage they have in this war, so they pushed themselves to work as hard as they could. The craftsmen received all sorts of work order, and their workload increased with every passing day. Despite that, the supervisor of all these technicians left that place immediately after giving out a round of instructions.

It was the same today, and the lower leveled craftsmen left behind sighed and proceed with their work slowly. If the instructions given by their supervisor wasn't clear enough, they would feel at a loss.

Horacio was always wearing the same few sets of old clothes, and looked plain and unimpressive. That might be so, he was still the inventor of the Levitate Ship and was undisputedly learned as a technician. If not, he wouldn't be able to take on the job of workshop chief.

Horacio gave the instructions to his subordinates and left the zone where the workshops were, and headed into the workshop specially prepared for him. In there was the results of the experiments that had been conducted there since they first learned that a Levitate Ship got sunk.

"The decimation of the Steel Wing Knights resulted in the Levitate Ships losing their position as the masters of the sky. Even if we build more of the same ship,

it would still be dangerous. It was just invented not long ago too. It's sure hard to make a living in this line."

He seemed uninterested in his own grumbles and walked towards the strange machine secured in the center of the workshop. It was a [cylindrical shaped] machine, with silver nerves and silver plates with graph emblems on them attached to it in a complicated manner.

"Well then, I need to hurry up and finish this [propulsion device]..."

Earlier, Horacio asked for a lot of intel from Doroteo Mardones and the Black Skull Knights who survived, and he was very intrigued about one of the reports.

"He actually spit out [explosive flames] from all over his body to perform abnormally fast acceleration... and that Silhouette Knight even flew into the air...!? And that thing also destroyed my!?"

That Silhouette Knights couldn't be described as with just [abnormal], it had demon god like prowess, and was the main reason why the Steel Wing Knights and their fleet of Levitate Ships were destroyed.

"Flew, a Silhouette Knight flew! Stop kidding with me. If a Silhouette Knight can fly as it wished, then what's the point of making Etheric Levitators!?"

He manipulated the control stick on the device agitatedly. The groan of the external ether reactor became louder, and the device used to devour the mana stored within the crystal tissue started up quickly. Soon, the air intake valve that used the designs of an ether reactor wailed loudly and sucked in air. A magical phenomenon occurred in accordance to the scripts on the emblem graphs. It was linked to a basic fire sigil — and the compressed air turned into explosive flames, and shot out in one direction as guided by the script.

The glaring light of the explosive flames cast a dark shadow on that man's face.

"Erupting in flames and taking to the sky... Using flames! He used the flame magic to...! That fellow [absorbed the explosive force, and used the reactionary force to move]!! Ha... Hahaha... How can there be such a genius fool!? The person who made this is definitely wrong in the head!!"

The air blast created by the explosive flame — maybe it was more appropriate to call it a jet spell, was as powerful as an overt level spell. It almost blew the whole device away. If it wasn't secured tightly to the ground, it would probably have crashed into the walls of the workshop.

When using explosive spells, one usually wouldn't ignite it near themselves. Because the user would be caught in the blast, so doing so intentionally wasn't something a normal person would consider. It was too twisted and insane.

Horacio's face twisted as he kept laughing out loud. No matter how one looked at it, directing the explosive flames that would result in one's destruction with any misstep as a mean of propulsion was suicidal. It even stunned someone like him who was clearly abnormal. While he felt respect towards the enemy engineer who turned this insane concept into reality, he was also engulfed in unhinged jealousy.

"Levitate Ship had to make use of the [Pure Ether usage theory] to soar in the sky! But that fool flew with just the power of explosive flames!! Fufu, haha! The theory my people thought up lost to a mere fool!?"

From the results of the investigation, Horacio knew that the enemy Silhouette Knights was moving by using the flames shooting out of it. He deduced just from that that the reactionary force of the explosion was used, showing his incredible imagination and there was no doubt that he was a genius. Maybe — Only those with crazy obsession for something could understand this.

"A propelling force far more powerful than wind power created through mana! If we can harness this power... we will have enough power to launch [that thing]."

It was very possible that his imitation of a magius jet thruster might become the most powerful propulsion system ever. There was only one conclusion that could be drawn from this, which was a bigger, more powerful —

Before he realized it, the crystal tissue that had expanded its mana stopped turning the propeller. Horacio approached the machine once again with a deep

smile on his face.

"Once [that thing] obtains a complete body, it will definitely clutch everything in the sky under its claws. That's right, the entire sky belongs to me...!! If I complete this, I won't need to be bothered by such trivial matters anymore...! Ahh, win or lose, can't this boring war just end already? Then I can soar in the sky as much as I wish!"

This engineer who has his sights set on the sky was driven only by his own ideals, and didn't care which nation wins or loses, or give any regard to the life or others. It wasn't clear if it was fortunate or unfortunate, but no one noticed his madness.

The Western Grand Storm — The most prominent characteristic of this war was the commitment of many new technologies. The engineers of the two greatest powers, Žaloudek Kingdom and New Kuscheperca Kingdom, both have abnormally large contributions, bringing further chaos into this war.

Arc 9: The Birth of the Flying Dragon

Chapter 38: New Kuscheperca Kingdom Army Advance

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天酒之瓢

illustration 黒銀



「ああ、両手にカワイイ……。
これほどとっても幸せな感じ！」

片側にエル、
もう片側にはエレオノーラが座り、
挟まれたアディが何やら
ととてもほくほくし始めた……

The clouds moved peacefully in the sky, and the wind softly caressed the smooth hair of the girl sitting in her chair.

She put down her teacup gently, and got up unhurriedly with her hand pressing on her hair. She approached the railing slowly, and the sights below expanded before her eyes.

In front of her was the [Lacepede Castle], known for its four towers, and the city that seemed to radiate out from the castle — this was the capital of the New Kuscheperca Kingdom, [Fontaine].

The city which was lifeless under Žaloudek Kingdom's rule had returned to the hands of its original owners, and was slowly regaining its vigour. This was because it had renewed commerce with Fremmevira Kingdom, which was on the eastern side of the Aubigne Mountain Range along the [East-West Highway], Occident Road

This trade route was a blessing for the citizens, and also a lifeline for the new Kingdom that was having a hard time.

"The city and our nation is gradually returning to the way it was..."

This girl was [Eleonora Miranda Kuscheperca], the queen of New Kuscheperca Kingdom who was just coronated a few days ago.

"What's the matter, Your Majesty?"

At this moment, someone spoke with her softly. It was a knight with a strange staff and silver short sword hanging from his waist. It was clear that he was a [pilot] of Silhouette Knights from how lightly he was dressed. Eleonora's melancholic face turned gentle.

".....Mr Archid."

In contrast to the smiling queen, the young pilot [Archid•Olter] who spoke seemed to be at a lost.

"Erm, I already told you... Your Majesty, I'm just a mere knight, you don't need to address me as [Mister]..."

"No, Mr Archid, this is not a matter of our positions, this is my personal preference... And you don't need to stand on ceremony, just talk to me naturally like we first met... Can't you do that?"

Eleonora's face became depressed in an instant. Chid scratched his head, wondering what he should do.

That was back when she was still a princess that had fallen into the clutches of the Žaloudek Kingdom. The Silver Phoenix Knights attacked in order to rescue the imprisoned royals. During that mission Chid swore an oath to Eleonora, saying that he will be her knight and fight for her.

She seem to trust him a lot too — that was great, but her attitude seemed very intimate. The busybody Knight Commander and even the young master ordered him to hold the title of Eleonora's personal knight on top of his position as a member of the Silver Phoenix Knights.

He had been acting as her escort recently, and when the two of them were together, Eleonora's mischievous actions got Chid spinning in circles.

"That's a bit... No, it's not really a problem. Eh, leaving that aside, I saw you sighing. Are you worried about something?"

Eleonora put her hand on her cheek as if she was surprised.

"Nothing, I'm just thinking it's great that Fontaine had regained its vigour..."

Despite what she said, her expression still looked stiff. Chid tilted his head in doubt and turned his sights to the scenery beyond the railings.

They were at the balcony at the top of Lacepede Castle. This place was usually plain with just simple decor, but now it has an aura of extravagancy.

There were tables full of all sorts of snacks everywhere. Maids bustled between the participants chatting happily, refilling the drinks for everyone. There was a small scale tea party going on right now.

"Ah — ! The two of you are chatting at that place again. Hey, the tea will get cold okay?"

With a cake in one hand, Ady interrupted the two who were at a loss for words. The maids behind her were preparing to switch the tea that had turned cold. Ady stared at Eleonora, then suddenly held her hand.

"Really now, Ellie. It is a waste of your cute face if you keep lowering your head! Here, have some delicious cake and cheer up!"

"That's true. Pardon me, Miss Ady. I can't be so down even at a time like this... I have decided to be positive and look straight ahead. Fufu, let's enjoy the cake."

They might be about the same age, but Ady's attitude was rather brazen

towards a reigning queen. Chid was troubled by how his younger sister was acting, but the people around them didn't seem to mind. Eleonora herself was all smiles as she helped Ady fill her plate with cake. Her demeanour was too different from what was expected of a [queen], she was just like a normal girl.

"Haha, aside from us, no one else will see this. Don't hold back and just enjoy yourself."

[Martina Alt Kuscheperca] looked at them with a smile. She was now the ruler of Lacepede Castle in her husband's stead, and also acting as the deputy of the queen. Because she had been helping Eleonora so closely in recent times, she understood how heavy the burden on her was.

"That's right ~ the tea and cakes are delicious!"

"You are being too unrestrained..."

They didn't need to worry about etiquette for this tea party, but Ady wasn't being modest at all. As the vague idea that [it's true that being too polite is suffocating] surfaced on Chid's mind, a piece of cake suddenly appeared before him.

"Mr Archid, would you like some cake?"

"Uwah!? Ah, alright, I will be happy to... Eh, can you, put it on a plate, I will eat it myself..."

For some reason, the cake wasn't on a plate, but offered to him on a fork. Chid had an ominous feeling and tried to dissuade her, but his resistance was weak and futile before Eleonora's gentle smile.

"Here, please eat it just like this."



Chid was overwhelmed by her smiling aura, and braced himself after a short while.

Queen Eleonora lived a sheltered life since she was little, up until the drastic change brought about by the war. When she recovered from her depression, she gradually learned to take on the responsibility of a queen, and how to play this role. But perhaps this was the result of her stress, she would occasionally show her mischievous side, especially when she was with Chid.

"Hmm, it's great to see Ellie being so lively!"

[Emrys Geijer Fremmevira] nodded strongly as he looked at the next table that was going beyond [lively], and gradually getting rowdy. He then grabbed the snacks on the table and attempted to put it into his mouth. But [Isadora Adalina Kuscheperca] sitting besides him slapped his hand.

"Sigh, Rys-nii is so crude as usual. You have to eat properly with a knife and fork."

"Eating small mouthfuls isn't my style."

Emrys had no choice with Isadora intimidating him with a stiff face and sharp gaze. He stuck his fork into the cake, and stuff the entire slice into his mouth. Isadora could only nurse her forehead and sigh after witnessing this scene.

When the tea party participants took a break after a while, Eru suddenly appeared.

"Sorry I'm late."

"Ah, you're finally here! This way, here, there's still cake~"

Ady quickly prepared the refreshments and patting the seat besides her, Eru obediently sat down by her side. After taking a big mouthful of the tea Ady offered him, he exhaled with satisfaction.

Ahh, both people besides me are so cute... How blissful!

Ady was seated between Eru and Eleonora, and couldn't hide the joy in her heart as she smiled gleefully — let's ignore her for now.

"The tea tastes delicious after a day of hard work."

"Thank you for your hard work, Lord Echevarria, your help is much appreciated in all sorts of ways."

"Don't mention it, I was only late to the party because I was having too much fun collecting data."

In contrast to the Kuscheperca side who showed an apologetic face, the members of the Silver Phoenix Knights adopted the attitude of "here goes the knight commander again". In actual fact, Eru would have dived into his research relentlessly if he was left alone.

A short moment later, Martina and Eleonora's expression turned serious. This tea party was held in order for Eleonora to take a breather, but it was also for an important discussion.

".....Lord Echevarria, I would like to discuss something with you."

"Addressing me as [Lord] makes me uneasy. The old master did entrust me with a knight order, but I don't hold any peerage. Please address me like you usually do."

The [knights] in this world wasn't an aristocratic title, but [pilots] with the skills to man Silhouette Knights.

His opening sentence made Eleonora dumbfounded. She was still inexperienced as a queen, and even if that wasn't the case, this youth named [Ernesti Echevarria] was an unfathomable existence.

He was 17 just like Eleonora, but was as small in stature as she was despite being a man, and had a cute face that would make others mistake him for a girl. His slender body might seem unrelated to violent affairs at a glance, but he was actually the strongest pilot in his knight order. Just his machine [Ikaruga] alone had exceptional performance, the amazing battle merits he achieved in the battle of Missillier earned him the nickname of death god and demon god, feared by friend and foe alike.

Kuscheperca knew very well that Silhouette Knights were more important to him than anything else, and he would act on the incredible values he holds. He would expand his energy on nonsensical things at times. Enhancing his allies' Silhouette Knights or developing the Missile Javelin was all fine, but taking the wreckage of every single enemy machine he defeated is going a bit out of control.

On top of that, he was the knight commander of the strongest fighting force behind the resurgence of the New Kuscheperca Kingdom — the Silver Phoenix Knights. For the people from Kuscheperca, the existence of the [Silver Phoenix Knights] was filled with mysteries. In order to lend his aid, Martina's nephew Emrys brought this knight order from Fremmevira Kingdom, and they were a group that couldn't be judged by common sense and don't play by the established rules.

They possessed the most powerful and advanced Silhouette Knights as well as the unique Centaur Knights, and took pride in their top notch combat capability. This alone made them highly regarded, and they provided the technology to forge new models of Silhouette Knights, and successfully defeated the then unknown weapon — the Levitate Ship. Their actions had gone far beyond what was expected of a [knight order]. Even Queen Eleonora had to show her best hospitality when interacting with their knight commander.

Normally, the queen should be negotiating with Emrys, the second prince of Fremmevira Kingdom, but things weren't that simple. Compared to Emrys who was royalty, the knight commander's words seemed to hold more weight with the Silver Phoenix Knights. They might be taken aback by him at times or treat him with a casual attitude, but it was certain that their trust in each other was infallible.

And so, Eleonora had to face this knight commander who was as strong as a monster, despite not holding any peerage. For the Western League of Nations (Occident) where the values of birthrights and Aristocracy was deeply rooted, the very existence of this youth didn't make sense. And she had to receive him on a higher level protocol than that of a royal.

"... Then I will address you as Mr Ernesti."

After hesitating momentarily, Eleonora decided to treat him respectfully as Chid's friend. This was more restraining than he expected, causing Eru to cast a questioning gaze to the person behind her. Chid shook his head without a word.

"... Alright, if that pleases Your Majesty."

Eleonora's expression relaxed, and she took a shallow breath before getting right to the point:

"The matter I wish to discuss is about the Silhouette Knights wreckage currently in Mr Ernesti's possession."

The New Kuscheperca Kingdom and the Silver Phoenix Merchant had a contractual agreement with regards to the enemy forces that had been defeated. During the battle with these giant humanoid weapons, the destroyed machines were important spoils of war. Parts from the broken machines could be repurposed and in most situation, the stubbornly tough core parts could be installed directly into another machine.

The problem was that the war merit of the Silver Phoenix Knights were too great. The Silver Phoenix Knights with Ikaruga leading the charge decimated one enemy brigade with just a company. And now, these wreckages were in their possession.

"The new nation we have rebuilt needs to expand our forces and launch a counteroffensive against the Žaloudek Kingdom. To do so... We need more Silhouette Knights, every single one counts."

Following the Resvant Vido, the Kuscheperca Kingdom committed the powerful new machine model, the [Revantier], but those were just rushed prototypes to make up the numbers. Despite the workshops in Fontaine and the neighbouring towns working round the clock, it won't be able to muster the needed numbers. As for the Tower Knights(Resvant Vido) that made up most of their forces, they weren't suited for attacks due to their incredibly slow movements. Before they forge enough Revantiers, they couldn't take the initiative and attack. Be it the cores or the steel, they needed as much resources as possible.

"Hence, we would like to reforge the wreckages that has been transferred under Mr Ernesti's name, and add them to our numbers."

Eru and the entire Silver Phoenix Knights came from Martina's hometown — Fremmevira Kingdom, and were here on loan, providing assistance in anything they could. But the New Kuscheperca Kingdom didn't command authority over them as they were here only to help. And so, they needed to be treated delicately.

"The enemy still has many of our nobles under their control, so we're stuck in this dire situation of having insufficient forces. This might be a breach of our contract... But please give us your aid..."

"Alright, I understand."

Eru accepted it without any fuss with a smile. Eleonora and the others were caught off guard, but they turned tense quickly. They had gradually realized that this youth's smile was rather dangerous.

And without letting down everyone's expectations (?), Eru added further—

"Let me see, how about this? No matter how good we are in building Silhouette Knights, it would be too much of a hassle to deal with that many wreckages. Considering the time and effort needed to reforge them, I will hold on to some. I'll loan the rest to your Kingdom's war efforts. What do you think?"

Their worries appeared to be unfounded, Eru's answer was completely within the acceptable realm of common sense.

"Thank you, we will have enough forces now..."

Eleonora was just about to breath a sigh of relief, but Eru wasn't finished yet. What he said next made Eleonora's entire body tense:

"...The Silhouette Knights I loan out will then be considered a part of my forces, and our contract will still be in effect...Since the enemy defeated by our forces will become my possession — so this will be applicable to the machines I loaned out too correct?"

They quickly realized Eru's intention. As long as the contract was in effect, with every enemy they defeat, the number of machines belonging to the Silver Phoenix Knights will increase.

When the reforged machines return to the battlefield, they would then defeat even more enemies — a vicious cycle that would continue until all the enemy forces were wiped out would be established.

Not just Eleonora, even Martina was left speechless as they stared at the gleeful youth. Eru was acting like he usually does, which meant — this youth was seriously planning to devour an entire nation.

"Hey Silver commander, look at what you've done, aunt doesn't even know how to react! You're making things too difficult for them!"

When the scene was shrouded by a strange atmosphere, Emrys who couldn't read the mood suddenly grabbed Eru's head. As they watched Eru's hair being ruffled, they laughed at the same time.

"Fufu, I'm just kidding. Even with that many wreckages, it will just increase the workload in transportation and reforging, and give me a headache. And so, let's change the terms in the contract, and leave it for negotiation after the new Kingdom is rebuilt. And of course, we will loan out the reforged machines to you. After all, we can't miss out on this chance to attack the Žaloudek Kingdom."

Eru finally escaped from Emrys clutches, and said calmly as he tidied his messy hair.

"And compared to broken Silhouette Knights, I prefer ones that can move."

"Hmm, is that so? Make sense... Thank you for your assistance, Ernesti."

Martina who was beside the stiff queen finally recovered from her speechless state. Even though Kuscheperca got what they wanted from the negotiation, they didn't feel at ease. Eru said he was kidding, but no one present thinks that was really a joke.

Compared to the shuddering Kuschepercas, the Silver Phoenix Knights seemed to be used to this. Because when Silhouette Knights were involved, their knight commander might really devour an entire nation.

"Hey Silver commander, don't bully my aunt and cousins!"

"I'm surprised that you're saying that. This is just a little joke to lighten the mood so everyone can relax."

"It obviously made everyone more tensed instead."

Emrys reached out to grab his head again, but Eru escaped out of his arm range. However, he was nabbed by Ady who was on the other side. She held him tightly in her arms and tidied his ruffled hair. The Kuscheperca royals still didn't understand if the knight commander was being treated with respect or casually. But from the looks of things, they would need to keep up their relationship with the cute and scary knight commander.

In the past, the Pan-Kucher road was an important road that run across the old Kuscheperca Kingdom. Even after the Žaloudek Kingdom conquered most of these territories and the New Kuscheperca Kingdom was founded, this remains the same. It was difficult to travel within Žaloudek Kingdom's circle of influence, but there were plenty of laden cargo going about in the cities of the new Kuscheperca kingdom.

In accordance to their discussion a few days ago, the Silver Phoenix Knights handed the wreckages of the enemy Silhouette Knights to the new Kingdom. Despite being wreckages, there were still many recyclable parts, as well as core parts such as Ether Reactors and Magius engines. In most cases, they could be installed for use immediately.

Using these resources as the foundation, the new Kingdom did everything they could to rebuild their forces. Not just the area around Fontaine, they tapped on the workshops in each of the regions to forge the latest model of machine, Revantier.

During the battle of Missillier, the new kingdom and the Silver Phoenix Knights defeated the enemy commander Prince Cristóbal. That might be so, but most of Kuscheperca's territories still lies in the hand of Žaloudek Kingdom, and didn't make too much of a dent on their overwhelming forces. If they want to go on the counteroffensive, the most important thing would be to muster enough numbers. On the side note, in their rush to increase production numbers, many of the Revantier made in this period had spare parts taken directly from the Tyrant installed in them. If it didn't affect performance, they would ignore it most of the time.

And so, the completed Revantiers were despatched to the various territories of the new kingdom. The preparation for the counteroffensive, or maybe the fight to defend the land of the new kingdom was about to begin.

A convoy of carriages galloped along the streets, kicking up clouds of dust behind it.

This was one of the transport units sending the Silhouette Knights towards the frontlines within the Žaloudek Kingdom. This special unit have gigantic carriages that could ferry giant humanoid weapons — the Revantier which were 10m tall. And the thing towing these carriages weren't ordinary horses, but machines with the upper torso of a man and the lower torso of a horse. Standing 15m tall, they were the Centaur Knights [Tzendrinble].

When transporting Silhouette Knights, the norm was to assemble the

components partially and load them into several carriages, and then finishing the assembly at the destination. Another way would be to assemble the machine and then let it walk by itself. Both methods need plenty of effort and time, but there was a unit with outstanding performance during this transportation process. And of course, that would be the company (10 units) of Centaur Knights from the 3rd company of the Silver Phoenix Knights.

Tzendrinble's speed was exceptional amongst Silhouette Knights, and when equipped with carriages, it had excellent transportation capabilities, and could send Silhouette Knights to various destinations speedily. The production speed of the new Kingdom was increasing but their transportation speed remained stagnant, so the aid of these centaur knights were invaluable. Many of the soldiers in the frontlines were still putting up a stubborn defence with the modified Resvant Vido, so the powerful new models were a welcome addition anywhere.

The 3rd company was also galloping along the road on a transport mission today when this incident happened.

"... All units be on alert, something's coming!"

The captain of the 3rd company [Helvi Oberg] shouted through the loudspeakers, and then looked closely at the holo monitor in her machine.

"Sigh, it's obvious who's coming."

The team members realized the true identity of the disturbance immediately — and a black ship appeared in the corner of the sky, the Levitate Ship.

As its silhouette becomes clearer, the Žaloudek Kingdom's flags drawn on the sails on both sides of the ship could be seen.

The Levitate Ships unit from Žaloudek Kingdom — the Steel Wing Knights suffered tremendous losses during the battle of Missillier and was wiped out. That didn't mean all the Levitate Ships were lost, but they couldn't despatch large scale operation any more. On the other hand, there had been an increase in the frequencies of such small scale guerilla attacks.

The Levitate Ships could move without being constrained by terrain, and were elusive as usual. They didn't attack the strongholds, and were repeatedly harassing the transport teams without rest.

"I thought they prefer clashing head on, but they are good at playing such dirty tricks too? How despicable!"

It was natural for Helvi to feel annoyed. The Levitate Ship units from the Žaloudek Kingdom learned their lesson from failure and stopped using airdrop tactics. Instead of dropping off Silhouette Knights, their primary means of offence had changed to aerial attacks. However, the Levitate Ship only form of

anti-ground attacks were [catapults].

The accuracy of the catapults were low. It couldn't even hit a horse drawn carriage that's on the move. Simply put, the attacks launched by the Levitate Ship weren't very effective, and were harrassing at best.

"Come on, picking trouble with us every single time, what a pain. And shaking them off... seems unlikely."

The Tzendrinble might be fast, but it didn't stand much of a chance against the airborne Levitate Ship. Even if there was just one ship, the enemy having air superiority was still a troubling thing.

"Everyone, beware of stone bombardments! I don't think they will hit so easily... Huh?"

Like usual, they're probably here to harass us — But their prediction was overturned quickly.

The Levitate Ship turned and pursue the 3rd company from behind, and will then commence stone bombardment when they reached 3rd company's flank — That should be happening, but it was different this time. The Levitate Ship unleashed a crimson and ferocious[magic projectile]

Projectiles were fired continuously, landing in close proximity of the 3rd company and bursting into explosive flames. After the initial shock, the 3rd company quickly realized that this encounter was different than usual.

"What!? They are attacking with Silhouette Arms!? Is that..."

Her ominous feeling turned true. Helvi turned back and saw a cylinder protruding from the Levitate Ship. Not only was it huge, it's outline was very familiar, so she could discern it even from far away.

"Resvant Vido... a pirated version? Whatever that is, this means the enemy has made a model with Wizard Style."

While they were still shaken, more magic projectiles were fired from the Levitate Ship, casting more explosion around them. The unit couldn't evade them forever with their heavy cargo in tow.

"Captain! If this goes on...!!

"I know, we can't let them take pot shots at us so freely. We are hitting back, let them have a taste of our wrath!!"

On the captain's command, several of the Tzendrinbles deployed their back weapons. The tips of the weapons on the guide rails were pointed to the sky. These were [Missile Javelins] powered by jets — anti-air weapon, the [Vertical launched javelin thrower].

The 3rd company's excellent performance in transportation had already been explained, and their results were also top notched. It wasn't just their transportation capability, their possession of the anti-air Missile Javelins also played a big part. To counter the Levitate Ships, a few units in the company would always be outfitted with Missile Javelins and Vertical launched javelin throwers. The equipment also includes spare javelins and Silhouette Gears responsible for reloading the javelins, and was a substantial load to carry. Even though it eats into the precious cargo space, they couldn't let their guard down against attacks by the Levitate Ships.

"Aim! Fire! Let them know who they're messing with!"

The Missile Javelin flew out with an intense fiery trail behind it. It was connected to the Silhouette Knight with silver nerves, and could change directions freely as controlled by the pilot. It aimed for the Levitate Ship and started accelerating hard. The armour of the Levitate Ship alone wouldn't be strong enough to stop a fully accelerated javelin. The Levitate Ship was large in size, and wouldn't be fazed by just a few javelins. But if they could destroy the [Ethereic Levitator] which levitates the ship, it would definitely be sunk. During the battle of Missillier, many ships fell this way.

In the face of the hail of Missile Javelins, the Levitate Ship could only flee — Everyone thought so too, but what happened next gave a huge shock to the 3rd

company.

"That can't be!?"

There was a flash of light in the sky along with a booming sound. Thunder in such clear weather was unnatural, and was definitely triggered by magic. The lightning was as powerful as an overed spell, and hit the Missile Javelin accurately as if they were guided. The javelins hit by the lightning spell directly were destroyed and knocked down.

Even so, the defences of the lighting strike wasn't perfect. Aside from the few that were knocked down, most of the Missile Javelins passed through the lightning strike and pierced into the Levitate Ship.

In the end, the Levitate Ship left the stunned 3rd company behind and disengaged. The javelins damaged the ship's hull, but it wasn't critical. It wouldn't be so sure if it takes a few more hits. Fleeing might appear cowardly, but it was a wise decision.

Helvi watched the Levitate Ship flying away, still unable to recover from her shock.

"... They blocked a few Missile Javelins with lightning...!?"

This had complicated implications, spelling the end of the absolute advantage of their anti air weapon, and indirectly represents the Levitate Ship regaining their air superiority. It also further implies that the Žaloudek Kingdom would be striking back, and the situation would turn for the worse for the new kingdom.

"The enemy isn't waiting around idly like retards either. We have to report our encounter with that weird ship to the commander as soon as possible."

The Tzendrinbles turned around and galloped off. After they delivered the Revantier to the frontlines, they would bring news about the new Levitate Ship model and the machine specializing in magic projectiles back to Fontaine.

While the 3rd company was running around the nation delivering Revantiers, the 1st and 2nd company of the Silver Phoenix Knights were rushing to the borders of New Kuscheperca Kingdom, the frontlines against the Žaloudek Kingdom. On paper, the Silver Phoenix Knights was still a unit on loan from the Fremmevira Kingdom, which would lead to many inconveniences. Hence, they were bestowed the title of [Queen Eleonora's special knight unit]. By the way, they still retained their name as the Silver Phoenix Merchants.

With the new kingdom's organization chart still incomplete, the Silver Phoenix Knights was the only unit fully equipped with the next generation of [Eastern Mode] machines — a name that came from its place of origin — and has plenty of experience piloting them. As the strongest unit of the new kingdom, they would also provide lessons to the local knights who were new to these

machines. This made the unit welcomed wherever they go.

The 1st company of the Silver Phoenix Knights led by[Edgar• C •Blanche] crossed the borders of the new kingdom and headed into the stronghold of the Žaloudek Kingdom. This unit didn't have any slow Tower Knights with them, and comprises of Revantiers. The duty of a knight was to guard their territory, but they couldn't rest on their laurels. They protec, but they also attac.

The powerful Silver Phoenix Knights launched such attacks frequently, recapturing the territories that were lost.

"This isn't a small stronghold like the ones we encountered last time, the enemy will resist stubbornly. Everyone, advance with caution!"

Edgar's command was acknowledged by the team members behind him, they had taken down several small strongholds before. For the giant humanoid weapons Silhouette Knights, half hearted forts weren't much of a defence. It had nothing to do with being the attacker or the defender, the battle would be decided by the match between the Silhouette Knights. Only a fort protected by thick walls built along defensive lines would make a difference in a stronghold attack.

And that was exactly how this stronghold which was built on a hill. It was situated between the forest and uneven grounds, and the paths leading towards it were limited.

The 1st company and machines from the new kingdom raised their shields and continued their march towards the stronghold, moving into catapult range — wary of any attack that might come at them at any moment. Finally, the enemy appeared within their sights. The large figures of the black knights blocked the path leading to the fort, they had huge shields and seemed to have enhanced defences. The 1st company launched attacks with their Silhouette Arms, but it was ineffective against the Tyrants armed with their huge shields.

"As expected of large machines specializing in defence, they are really sturdy."

The black knights already have thick armour, so staying put and focusing on defence would maximize their advantage. They utilized the terrain and concentrated the black knights where the road was the narrowest, in a formation that negates their opponents offences. If the heavily armoured black knights prioritize on their defences, even the 1st company wouldn't be able to break through. The terrain constraints made it hard for them to flank behind the enemy for an effective attack. In the end, the new kingdom army retreated right before the sun started to set.

"This type of fort is hard to break through."

"And the enemies are black knights that completely blockaded the road."

The Žaloudek Army didn't pursue the new kingdom forces, so their return to base had a relaxed atmosphere. As he listened to the new kingdom knights discussing the day's battle, Edgar groaned on his pilot seat — he had a different view about this.

"The black knights might be great in defending, but the strange thing was how [resilient] their movement were."

The Silver Phoenix Knights participated in many attacks, so he had more intel and experiences than the new kingdom army, and could sense how the enemy had changed.

"Recently, our attack on their bases only end up in small skirmishes, something feels off."

This probably started with the debut of the Revantier which close their gap in performance compared with the Tyrants. Aside from the power out of the Žaloudek Army's large Tyrants, their heavy armour also gave them outstanding defences. He then noticed one thing—

"... We didn't take much damage."

They didn't deal much damage to the enemy, but it was the same for his allies. He couldn't feel the proactiveness that prioritize invasion and offence

that the Žaloudek Army had in the past. Most of their encounters were skirmishes with small numbers of black knights, or infrequent attacks by the Levitate Ships. It was clear that their opponent wasn't willing to engage in massive battles, and were switching their policy to being defensive.

"Are they wary of the Revantier, and don't want to attack carelessly? Or do they fear the carnage wrought by our knight commander?"

He couldn't give the answer right then. He felt uneasy, as if he was missing something crucial.

"No, they aren't just shying away from combat, they're probably waiting for a chance."

To stall for time? But both sides needed that. After the battle of Missillier, both camps needed to reorganize their forces. Letting more time pass would only allow both forces to consolidate more resources for their knights.

"That might be so, but it isn't wise to clash with them head on too anxiously."

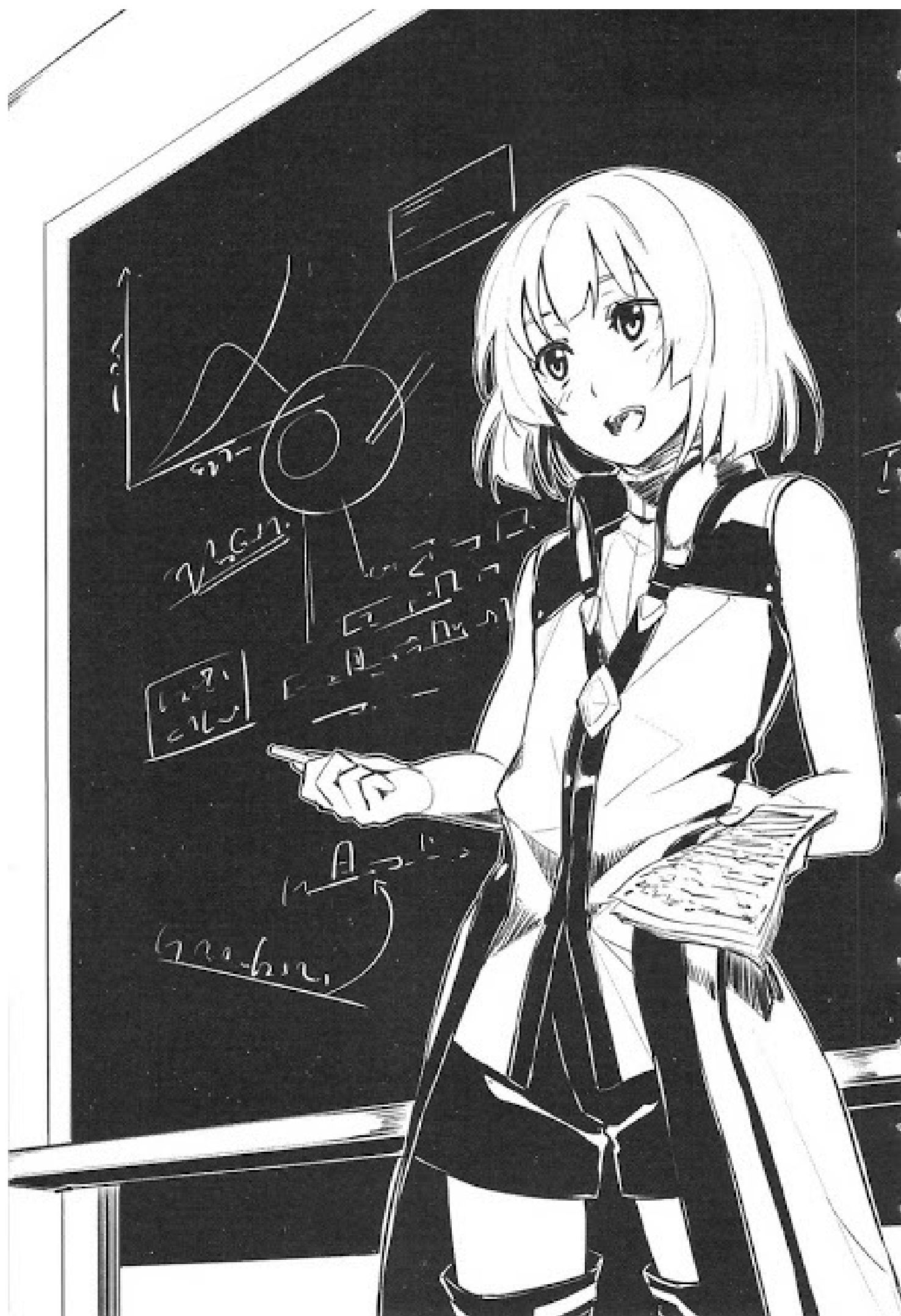
He couldn't make any bold moves since he didn't know the enemy's objective. The Silver Phoenix Knights was the strongest unit in the new kingdom army, and the more battles they fought, the more this rang true. They were slowly becoming the emotional support for the nation — that's why they couldn't

afford to be defeated.

Even the New Kuscheperca Kingdom army showed signs of becoming great again, they weren't strong enough for an offensive to drive out the Žaloudek Army. Unable to make any headway in their attacks, the new kingdom army could only let the time fly by.

In the end, the objective of the Žaloudek Kingdom remained a mystery as the impasse stretches on.

Chapter 39: Žaloudek Kingdom's Schemes



The stage switch from Fontaine to the city where Žaloudek Kingdom set up its central governance house — Delvincourt.

This happened before the rejuvenation of the New Kuscheperca Kingdom, when the Žaloudek Kingdom has yet to recover from the setback in the battle of Missillier. In the middle of the former royal castle's audience hall, a man was on his knees... no he was prostrating weakly before the throne as he wailed:

"Prince Cristóbal...!! To really... to really pass away before myself...!! That's impossible, impossible...!!"

He was the confidant of Žaloudek's Second Prince [Cristóbal Hasslo Žaloudek], the knight [Doroteo•Mardones]. He kept pounding the ground as if he was trying to vent his rage. His adopted son Gustavo watched silently behind him.

"A lapse, my thinking is too naive! Even the Black Skull Knights escorts couldn't protect His Highness! I should have ignored my confinement orders and went along with the expedition...!! If I was there, I would have safeguard His Highness even if it cost me my life!!"

"That's enough. Raise your head, Doroteo. We're the ones who ordered your confinement to reflect on your actions, it's not your fault that you weren't there. It's useless to lament about things you couldn't have helped."

A melancholic voice from the throne before Doroteo reached his ears. That used to be the seat of the king of Kuscheperca. After the nation fell, it was taken by the commander of the Žaloudek Army — Cristóbal. And now, it had been transferred to a young woman.

She was [Catalina Camilla Žaloudek], the daughter of the king of Žaloudek Kingdom, [Baldomero Bilt Žaloudek]. The first princess and also Cristóbal's elder sister.

"But...! Forgive my insolence, but I have served His Highness as his mentor and as his subordinate for many years. Going by the laws of nature, I should die first! No matter the reason, if this isn't my mistake, then...!!"

Doroteo retired from the frontlines because of his advanced age, but the higher ups think highly of his experience in the military and gave him the position as the Second Prince's mentor. As Cristóbal grew older, his role gradually changed to that of a confidant. He watched the Prince grew up, so to Doroteo, Cristóbal was just like a son. Catalina sighed, then leaned back on her throne.

"Doroteo, I know how you feel. You have worked very hard for Cristobal all this time. And that is why, now isn't the time for mourning."

When Doroteo lifted his head and saw Catalina's pale face, he held his breath from shock and quickly realized his mistake. Doroteo wasn't the only one hurt by the loss of Cristóbal. As his sister, Catalina was the one most pained by his

death. Doroteo was deeply shamed by his lapse for venting his emotions without thinking about how she felt. As explained, he was most loyal to Cristóbal, but his loyalty to the royal Žaloudek family was as unwavering as anyone else.

"I have decided. The one who caused such serious damage to our nation... and the one who took Cristobal's life, I will find him and kill him."

These words weren't just a personal vendetta for her family. Cristóbal was a royal of Žaloudek, and also the commander of the Kuscheperca invasion force. Casualties in war were inevitable, but once royal blood has been spilled, vengeance was certain. Taking this lightly would be a disgrace to their kingdom's name.

"Doroteo, you need to start by searching out the enemy and find out who killed Cristobal."

The surviving Black Skull Knights brought back news of Cristóbal's death. Cristóbal fell together with his Silhouette Knight Alkelorix from the flagship, and wasn't killed in the chaos of the battle. Someone committed this murder.

"... I know who is the criminal."

Doroteo raised his head resolutely. He had no hesitation in his eyes, as if he

had locked on to his enemy.

"He can attack the Levitate Ship His Highness is on directly! Kuscheperca don't have Levitate Ships, but they have him... the Silhouette Knight that can soar in the sky!!"

Now that he mentioned it, Catalina remembered the rumours she once heard in the past.

"... Are you talking about the one that sunk your ship?"

"Yes! He is the only one who can do such a weird thing. He suppressed the Levitate Ships in the sky by himself, and brought incredibly destructive powers...! Overturning common sense, must be that [Demon God] doings. He will definitely block our path sooner or later."

Catalina sighed deeply, she had almost forgotten about this rumour. When she first heard Doroteo's report, compared to the Demon God's existence, her attention was drawn to the escape of the Kuscheperca royals. She never imagined that the Demon God actually killed her brother. If her memory serves her well, the enemy was a powerful existence that could only be described as uncanny.

"So you're saying that Crist was murdered by that monster?"

Her soft groan didn't even reach Doroteo's ears, and simply melted into the suffocating air.

"Oh, seems like everyone is here"

The sudden appearance of an outsider swept the sullen air away in an instant. The dragging footsteps resounded on the stone floor. It came from a plain looking man.

"You are... Lord Collazo."

"Yes. Horacio Collazo here, reporting as summoned."

He bowed to the seemingly frustrated Catalina and the crazed looking Doroteo. Horacio seemed unfazed with the suffocating atmosphere, a gutsy person contrary to his plain looks. After all, this absolute mad man came to the very front lines just to see the performance of the Levitate Ships he designed in action. Soon, the one who summoned him — Catalina calmed her emotions, and wore her cool mask of a princess once again. To save time, she skipped the greetings and went directly into the topic:

"You finally came, Lord Collazo. Let's not waste time, tell me how goes your

plans for the Levitate Ships? To rejuvenate our army from that defeat, strengthening the Levitate Ships is a pressing matter. The Kuschepercas isn't making any major moves, which means they need time to reorganize their forces. However, we need to take action as soon as possible."

"I understand. I will use the best of my humble knowledge to do what I can and propose a plan."

Catalina's complicated expression relaxed a little when she heard that.

"Pray tell."

"Firstly, it's hard to say this but... To come up with a perfect plan, we will need to reevaluate the designs of the Levitate Ship itself. If we want to take on such a big overhaul project, what we lack the most is time. In that case, we can only focus on small scale changes, and I seek your understanding on that."

"... It depends on the content. Even if it doesn't take much time, it's pointless if it's not effective."

At this moment, Horacio glanced at Doroteo. Unlike Catalina who could conceal her emotions, he seemed barely able to suppress his feelings that were on the verge of exploding. Horacio will need to step on the tail of a beast later, so he adopted a resignation attitude as he said:

"Then let's hurry... I want to start with reducing the number of Tyrants the Levitate Ship can ferry."

"What...!? How is that an enhancement? If you reduce the number of core combat units, how can we fight!?"

Horacio soothed Doroteo who was panicking because of the unexpected answer with his hand gestures, and continued:

"It's natural for Lord Mardones to have such doubts. Let me explain... In the past the combat capability of a Levitate Ship was dependant on the number of Tyrants it could transport. But that battle made me realize that this wouldn't work. What the Levitate Ships needed wasn't transport capability, in the upcoming era, the Levitate Ships will need sufficient offensive capabilities too. We already have the [catapult], but they couldn't be use against moving targets. So I changed my approach and learned the enemy's techniques and use it against them. I plan to create Silhouette Knights that specialize in magic projectiles fire like the [Resvant Vidos], then install them on the Levitate Ships to be used like Silhouette Arms."

The place turned silent momentarily. They pondered what Horacio said carefully. In response to Catalina's questioning gaze, Doroteo nodded a little bitterly:

"The thought of imitating them again is unpleasant, but I agree that we should use what available resources we have. Speaking of which, Lord Collazo, the offences should be adequate, but there is still another problem. Do you have any countermeasures against the strange powerful javelins that sunk most of our Levitate Ships?"

Horacio crossed his arms and said with a sigh:

"Ara... That's the difficult part. I heard that the javelin can even pierce the Tyrant's armour once it build up enough speed. That is far beyond what the Levitate Ship's armour can withstand. But thickening the armour will increase the ship's weight, killing off the speed advantage of the Levitate Ship. We will need the magic projectile Silhouette Knights I mentioned earlier to take on additional roles, and either knock off the javelins with spells or defend with shields."

The group couldn't understand the main point he was making right away, and an air of suspicion arose. But that wasn't entirely their fault. The surprising thing was, Horacio's proposal might be primitive, but was very similar to the concept of CIWS [Close-in Weapon System] used in vessels.

According to the pilots of the Black Skull Knights who escaped, they finally understood the gist of what happened in the battle of Missillier. Many new technologies appeared at that time, which stimulated him — and led him to propose even more advanced concepts.

Catalina tried her best to understand these ideas that were ahead of their times, and asked him:

"Do you think that will work?"

"Pardon me for being blunt, I believe it will have some effect, but it will be far from perfect. As I said in the beginning, the biggest problem lies in the constraint of time. The more fundamentally different the countermeasures are, the more time that will be needed. Since we don't know when the Kuschepercas will act, I'm afraid we will lag behind the enemy if we start over with the construction of the Levitate Ships."

Despite it being a rushed job, Horacio's plan should have some effect. Since time was of the essence, it was true that they couldn't proceed with any major overhauls. Catalina finally nodded:

"You mean this is better than doing nothing... Very well then, Lord Collazo, proceed according to your plan. The usage of the Levitate Ships will now change drastically. Doroteo, muster the surviving Steel Wing Knights and think of a better battle plan."

"By your command. The surviving Steel Wing Knights will find a new purpose... Princess, we still have another powerful foe we must defeat."

She didn't need to look at Doroteo to know what he was referring to. During the battle of Missillier where the Black Skull Knights took tremendous losses, that thing was more destructive to the Steel Wing Knights than those strange javelins. The powerful foe was —

"The enemy who murdered Prince Cristóbal, that fearsome Silhouette Knight.....[Demon God]."

"Doroteo, do you have any good ideas on how to defeat the Demon God?"

Catalina's query stirred his memory, things he couldn't forget even if he tried. The incarnation of malicious power was still fresh on Doroteo's mind. That single Silhouette Knight could actually dance nimbly in the air, unleashing destructive powers even the black knights couldn't match. What method could there be to defeat that monster? Even a formidable pilot like him would have no chance. It was a shame, but he could only answer his mistress' question faithfully:

"Even with Lord Collazo's new Levitate Ships, I think it will still be difficult to defeat that Demon God..."

"Hmm, the Demon God you say? I heard about that too. It might be a product of insanity, but it is not impossible to take down."

Before anyone could rebuke him for his rude interjections, they were shocked by what he was implying and focused their gaze on Horacio.

"What...! I know you are an excellent engineer, but you actually know how to fight!?"

"Yes. Well, I mention it is a way, but I'm just an engineer, so I can only provide the [means] to solve the issue. Whether it can be done will depend on the performance of the great knights piloting them."

Horacio seemed to be disinterested, with only a faint smile at the corner of his mouth to show his confidence. A crack appeared on Catalina's calm mask. She suppressed her anxiety and asked as coolly as she could:

"Pray tell, what is the means you speak of?"

"Overwhelm him with numbers."

When he heard Horacio's answer, Doroteo shook an refuted immediately:

"Did you forget the lesson we learned in Missillier? The Demon God can soar in the sky, and wasn't fazed with fighting against a hundred others. The Black

Skull Knights were brought to the brink of destruction because of this... Numbers alone wouldn't work."

"It is as you say, but let's consider it from another angle. Since many weak units will be defeated easily, then we should consolidate the power of many into one, and create a powerhouse that will surpass the Demon God. What do you think?"

His answer had a tint of being ominous, making the others look at each other in doubt. What Horacio mentioned completely shattered their common sense. The technology that brought the Levitate Ships into this world was supplemented by the bits of other worldly knowledge glimpsed from the battle of Missillier, and would create an even more terrifying alien.

"What does Your Highness think? This would require some time... But with your permission, I will get it done."

With Horacio lowering his head in front of her, Catalina closed her eyes and thought for a moment, then opened them and nodded:

"Permission granted. Lord Collazo, you must get it done."

"Your Highness! Please assign the task of piloting that machine to me! I will take down our sworn enemy even if it cost my own life!! "

Doroteo volunteered immediately. His greatest pride was his exploits and experience on the battlefield. Avenging Cristóbal and aiding Catalina would be his final quest.

"Very well, for the sake of that child, submit your life to me. Until we tear out the throats of our foe, we will never stop... I leave the rest to you."

"I am honoured by your words!"

Seeing Doroteo filled with a ferocious aura, Catalina nodded her head with satisfaction. He might not be young anymore, but he was still a revered general in the Žaloudek Army. If he had the resolve to put his life on the line, then she trust that he would bring back good news. She then shifted her gaze behind Doroteo and said:

"Not just Doroteo, I will also cancel your confinement and assign a role to you. [Gustavo Mardones], use your skills with your swords to aid your **【adoptive】** father complete his mission."

"By your will, I will put on a good show."

Gustavo who had been kneeling quietly answered firmly. But contrary to his

outward appearance, his eyes had a hint of sadness as he looked at the back of his fired up adoptive father.

Sigh — looks like Dad is bent on dying for the cause... It can't be helped, since the Prince is dead.

His thinking was different from his father. He was a loyal direct subordinate of Cristóbal, but didn't have the crazed devotion of his father.

Dad will probably take care of that sworn enemy. The adversary is getting stronger, so I can go all out now. I can help take revenge too, a worthy place to swing my swords.

From a perspective completely different from his father, Gustavo was plenty crazy too, a battle maniac. He was deeply attracted to swords, an absolute madman who thinks the greatest joy was to battle. The fighting spirit of Catalina and Doroteo hell bent on revenge was the reason why Gustavo was drawn in. Without giving any hints of such thoughts, he lowered his head in a pretense of being solemn.

"Because the Kuscheperca Kingdom won such a decisive victory, they can't make their next move right away. We need to send out our troops to extinguish the spreading fire. As for the method Lord Collazo mentioned, that will take time. We need to make our base sturdy first. To do that, we need to strengthen our defences until the time comes."

Catalina's orders were conveyed to every zone under the rule of Žaloudek. And so, the Žaloudeks changed their strategy drastically for the first time since the war began.

The Tyrants assigned to the various territories were responsible for strengthening their fort's defences, and to assume an impregnable formation. In the meantime, the construction of the [Mimic Resvant Vidos] and the modification of the surviving Levitate Ships were also ongoing. The Resvant they captured served as the base. Since this modification focused on magic projectiles instead of combat capability, this was a good chance to make use of the old machines. Since the foundation and the purpose of the customization was similar, the end product should be very similar to the Resvant Vido.

For the Žaloudek Kingdom that lost its Black Skull Knights, rebuilding the Steel Wing Knights and Levitate Ships was their lifeline. They have strict orders that this project was the top priority.

Žaloudek Kingdom's defense strategy and the new Levitate Ships being developed in secret blunted the attack of the New Kuscheperca Kingdom, keeping the war at a standstill. While the alien squirms in the backstage. The birth of the [Demonic Monster] created for the sake of defeating the Demon God gets closer with every passing second.

C.E. 1282, summer is coming.

After the dramatic events of the New Kuscheperca Kingdom's founding, the

tensed situation gradually relaxed, and signs of change appeared slowly. The ace of the new kingdom — the Silver Phoenix Knights Knight Commander Ernesti gathered everyone for a secret meeting at this time.

"... Thank you everyone for coming. Let's not waste time, and let me explain the investigation report on the Žaloudek Army's black knight and Levitate Ship."

And of course, this wasn't a strategy meeting. Regrettably, the hobbyist wasn't interested in how the war was faring, and only focused on the toy before him. He held a thick stack of paper that could be used as a murder weapon in his hand, and continued his explanation in high spirits.

"Sigh, I saw you rummaging through those wreckages. So you have finished your investigation?"

The people he had gathered includes the Silver Phoenix Knights craftsmen led by the Boss, who was already used to this. But the knightsmiths from the New Kuscheperca Kingdom couldn't stay so calm. They looked at the petite youth before them with an amazed expression. The mysterious new weapon — the Levitate Ships have been giving the Kuscheperca Kingdom a hard time since the opening battle. It uses mysterious technology to levitate a ship and no one expected it to be unravelled in such a short time. The most baffling thing was Eru explaining it to them so openly. Although the Silver Phoenix Knights were reliable allies, the fact remains that they were a unit on loan from a foreign nation. Was it appropriate to make information about a technology which could decide a war public? At least to them, such information should be kept classified.

Eru ignored their confusion and made the fruits of his research public.

"There are many mysteries surrounding the Levitate Ship, but we have the actual thing with us and luckily found the key to the mystery... Well, I want to explain about the ship, but it's better to start from their main combat unit — the black knight Tyrants."

Eru turned to the blackboard as if he wanted to hum, and wrote down the important parts from the paper packed with the investigation data.

"Like its appearance implies, the Tyrant is a heavy weight machine. It's structure includes the things we're familiar with, such as capacity frames, back weapons and strand crystal tissue. Even the joints looks familiar... they had replicated the technology behind the [Tellestarle] very carefully. The parts they developed independently would be their fine tuning it into a high power output machine to maximize its advantage as a heavy weight machine."

"Hmmp! It makes my blood boil, but I already expected that."

The Boss' face turned sour as he crossed his arms. He remembered how the source of these technology, the Tellestarle was stolen, and it wasn't a fond memory.

"Yes, but there is something strange. If they enhanced the power output with the Strand type, their mana consumption will be intense and their endurance should drop drastically. We had a hard time when we built our machines back then too. However, the Tyrant can last for quite a long time. So there must be a trick behind this."

"The problem of endurance is a big headache, and I don't think it can be solved that easily."

Eru could only smile wryly as he watched the Silver Phoenix Knights Knightsmiths' thousand yard stare. There was no need to repeat how arduous their path in forging the Kardetolle from the Tellestarle was. And the engineers of Žaloudek Kingdom made a great achievement that the Silver Phoenix Knights couldn't manage.

Eru then drew a strange device on the blackboard.

"This part uses the technology they developed independently. I found this device connected to the Ether Reactor. After studying the inside, I discovered that the design was very simple, with just the [Ethelite] attached to its core. This device is connected by silver nerves and controlled by the Magius engine, so I inspected the content of the Magius Engine a little."

Even though Eru was talking about something big that didn't match the term

[a little], no one felt like retorting him.

"If this device is activated, the Ethelite inside will react and create concentrated Ether. Then the Ether will be injected directly into the Ether Reactor. Let me think... let's assume this device is called [Ether Supplier]."

"Hey, that's..."

Enlightenment appeared on the faces of the knightsmiths, along with a hint of bitterness.

"As everyone knows, Ethelites, as it's name implies, are [shards of Ether]. If it is left alone after digging it out, it will dissolve into Ether in the air and disappear. Hence, it is thought to be useless in the past. However, they seem to have found the perfect way to utilize them. They create concentrated Ether with this, and inject them into the Ether Reactor, creating a temporary burst of mana. What an interesting technique, there're people with unique idea in the Žaloudek Kingdom too!"

As they looked at Eru who was clapping his hands, everyone present slouch their shoulders weakly.

"Really now, why are you praising the enemy, boy?"

"I'm not praising the enemy, but the [engineer]. Even though the [user] is the enemy, but I don't think the [inventor] is one too. No matter what, good things are good. He spent so much thought on this, it is worthy of applause...! I feel that it's a pity that he's not our ally."

When they saw Eru smile so leisurely, the Boss and the others were irked at the most, but the Kuscheperca knightsmiths couldn't help groaning. From their perspective, the ones who develop new technologies leading to their nation suffering was the enemy. They only have hatred for them, and would never give them compliments. On the other hand, the new Silhouette Knights models designed by the knight commander of the Silver Phoenix Knights were stolen by those people. And after the enemy used his technology against him, he still found a part of the enemy that was praiseworthy. That might be the strong personality of the leader of the Silver Phoenix Knights, known for his engineering and combat skills. They looked at Eru with such feelings of awe.

Seeing the people around him sigh in admiration, the Boss felt the urge to remind them that [this had nothing to do with his magnanimity, his just not interested in things unrelated to Silhouette Knights]. But in the end, he swallowed his words and merely showed an irked face. Since the Boss didn't pop their bubble, it means that he could at least read the mood.

Eru then said [speaking of which] as an opener, changing the mood that was deviating away from the main topic.

"... This Ether Supplier isn't that omnipotent."

"Huh? What do you mean? From the sound of it, isn't it the silver bullet that can solve the endurance issues of the[Eastern Mode] machines?"

Seeing the Boss tilting his head in confusion, Eru showed a troubled expression.

"I should say this is.....[poison]? Ether Reactors are designed to convert the Ether in the air into energy. If concentrated Ether is injected into it, it will put a lot of stress on the reactor, and doing it too often will cause the reactor to break."

"Hey! The Ether Reactor is an important component of the Silhouette Knights! They are treating it as something [disposable]!? That's too wasteful! Damn it, there's no good way to go about it."

"Yes, so it can only be used as a last resort. I guess they don't really want to use it either."

The Silver Phoenix Knights machines, and the Revantiers made with the help of the new kingdom's craftsmen, solves the endurance issue by lowering output and storing the excess mana.

However, the same system couldn't provide the enhanced power of

Žaloudek's Tyrants, so they needed to install this queer device. This double edged sword increases its endurance at the cause of deteriorating its Ether Reactor, which was equivalent to the heart of a Silhouette Knight.

"That's my opening speech for now, on to the main topic, the investigation results of the [Levitate Ship]. Aside from the unknown technology that makes this humongous ship fly, we also made many new discoveries by studying its structure."

Everyone's expression turned serious. The Levitate Ship was the first aerial weapon deployed in live combat by the Žaloudek Kingdom, and the secrets behind them were about to be revealed. Eru ignored the wavering of the others, and wrote freely on the blackboard with his chalk. Every single white line drawn on it turns the unknown into known. This scene gave a strange sensation that was hard to describe to everyone.

"The ship structure is easier to explain. Most of it is made from steel and wood, and the workmanship isn't that complicated. As you can see from its appearance, it's propelled by its sails. It should be based on the techniques for building seaworthy ships, so the only strange thing about it is that [it floats]."

With the heart of the mystery in sight, someone couldn't help gulping audibly.

"The core of the Levitate Ship is completely different from an Ether Reactor, and have a special [reactor]. Everyone knows that I studied the captured ship thoroughly, but I can't find the answer. But during my investigation of the black

knights, I discovered a curious fact."

Eru knocked the blackboard with a loud "cock! ". The place he was pointing at was the device he was explaining just now.

"The Tyrants are also equipped with this Ether Supplier. And this device is connected to the reactor of the Levitate Ship. There are also a large number of silver nerves connected to it. It's function is just like what I explained... So this should be the heart, and proves that the reactor of the Levitate Ship [requires a large number of concentrated Ether]."

"... And your conclusion?"

"What makes the Levitate Ship float isn't magic, but the [effect of Ether itself], there must be some sort of secret behind this. Someone made a discovery we didn't know about."

Eru laughed happily.

"Alright, the practice run is perfect. Next, let's try operating the Levitate Ship we captured for real!"

Chatter broke out among the Kuscheperca knightsmiths, and a sense of unease spread amongst them. The enemy flagship was captured unscathed during the battle of Missillier, and the investigation should have been completed. In fact, according to the intel obtained from the captured enemy crew, they have grasped the general controls of the ship, just that the ship hasn't been flown yet. Everyone treated this ship like a plague, unwilling to actually venture into the uncharted territory of flight.

"... Hmmp, just get on with it. What's so scary about the sky? No matter what, our fates are tied to the boy, how can we back off because of something so trivial!!"

The first one to stand up was the Boss. He crossed his arms and nodded firmly. It seemed that he needed quite a bit of resolve to sound out his support for Eru, and the cold sweat on his brows seemed to express how he was feeling. After that the other Silver Phoenix Knights all responded bravely.

"Great! Everyone, let's fly together! It will be fine, I often fly in the sky in Ikaruga, it's really fun."

"Now is the only time I feel so envious about your optimistic and fearless character..."

Not just the Boss, everyone present shared the same sentiment.

"It looks huge from up close, as big as a brigade level demon beast. Such a thing actually can float in the sky..."

Several days later, the Boss muttered with mixed feelings in front of a Levitate Ship. This vessel used to be the flagship of Žaloudek Kingdom's punitive force, and was seized after Eru and Ikaruga forced their way on deck. It was the first Levitate Ship that was captured almost without any damage.

The inside of the Levitate Ship was big enough to hold Silhouette Knights, so it was naturally colossal in size. The Boss took another look at this massive thing, and was moved by the incredible phenomenon of this ship floating in the air. Eru who was making a rectangle with the thumb and index fingers of both hands and admiring the Levitate Ship through this gap he made turned and in response to the Boss' words:

"Indeed, the most surprising thing is — it's flight capability is solely provided by the [Ethereic Levitator]."

"That thing is completely different from an Ether Reactor, and operates purely on Ether... Alright, everyone take your position, let's begin."

The Boss held his breath and intentionally boarded the vessel with a cool demeanour. Many members of the Silver Phoenix Knights were going about their tasks inside. They all focused on their job at hand, as if they were trying to suppress their feelings on the unknown experience of flying in the sky. Only Eru looked excited and jubilant, as he looked up at the device at the center of

the ship.

"The heart of the Levitate Ship, the Etheric Levitator... Fufufu, what exactly makes it tick? "

"Hey, don't break it. No, don't you touch it. Listen, don't do anything reckless!"

The Boss roared at Eru who was mumbling dreamingly and caressing the device with his fingertips. The Etheric Levitator looked like a giant lantern, and the central portion was covered in glass, so its insides were visible. It was big enough to fit a Silhouette Knight in there. It wasn't in operation right now, so it was empty.

A moment later, the Boss who had given instructions all over the place raised his voice and yelled:

"Good, we will be beginning the test soon! This thing can fly in the first place, so there shouldn't be any problems. But we have not seen this thing before, so everyone be on your toes."

The members all acknowledged nervously and stood by at their assigned posts

"Initiate Ether supplier, inject concentrated Ether!"

After manipulating the controls, the Etheric Levitator awakened with a slight tremble. After the activated valve pumped out the air inside, the Ether supplier slowly inject concentrated Ether into the vacuum. The Ether inside glowed faintly as it gathered in the center, generating a levitating field as it did so.

The members watched the rainbow coloured lights shining out from the device with bated breath. At this point everyone felt the strange sensation of floating. A member looked out the window and couldn't help shouting:

"W-We have lift off! We're really levitating!"

"... Stop the ether supplier, and keep the levitator at its current status. Just a test flight for now, no need to go too high."

Eru instructed quickly, and a member turned off the Ether supplier. It seemed that the Etheric Levitator would remain as it is without outside influence, and would stay at the same altitude. The Levitate Ship simply stopped a few meters above ground.

During this time, the Boss who was standing firmly on the deck without a word slowly exhaled, then stroked his beard.

"This large ship is really floating... I have heard about this, but experiencing it first hand still feels incredible."

"Yes, it's impressive how this unknown function is put into practical application. This is fun."

Eru has knowledge from Earth, and didn't find large flying planes unfamiliar. Earth had airships that use buoyant gases to float, or planes that generate lift with its wings. For the Boss who was born and raised in this world, this was an existence he had never heard of before.

As the Etheric Levitator was very quiet, the inside of the Levitate Ship fell into dead silence. Slowly, this silence was broken and the hull started getting rowdy. Some members went to the windows, while others walked around worriedly, confirming the situation in their own way.

"Let's set down the anchor for now. The design of the ship and the effect of the ether, there're tons of things to study... It's going to get busy."

Because they captured a fully functional Levitate Ship, their understanding of the technology behind it and the ether would advance by leaps and bounds.

Starting with this first experimental flight, many tests were ran after that, and the members of the Silver Phoenix Knights gradually got used to the flight controls. They even used the excuse of experimental flight to test the speed limit, or flying it upside down, resulting in the ship nearly crashing. They showed off the robot maniac energy they got from their knight commander to the fullest extent. At the same time, Eru inspected the structure of the ship energetically.

"This unprecedented flying machine is well made, and made use of techniques for ships brilliantly. On the other hand, the inventor's thinking is too rooted in doing that, so there are parts that seem constrained by the concept of a ship. The biggest flaw is the lack of propulsion. It uses a blow engine — a type of Silhouette Arms that create wind, and they use their sail to catch that wind to move forward."

"Oh? You mean that it is just a normal sail ship, aside from the fact that it is flying in the sky?"

"Yes, and it is loaded with Silhouette Knights, making it even more heavy. The Levitate Ship was unexpectedly slow, and thanks to that, Ikaruga could pursue them easily back then. If we want to speed it up adequately, we will at least need the propulsion from something like the magius jet thruster."

"The only ones who would say this thing flies too slow is just you and Ikaruga. And even if a jet thruster was installed, no other machines aside from Ikaruga has the mana pool to support it."

Eru nodded at the Boss' complaints

"That would be difficult. Huge mana storage and Ether Reactor output would be indispensable. Even though it's not impossible with the equipment we currently have..."

Eru closed one eye and said while lost in thought. As the Boss listened, he could guess what the solution was.

His title of [Silver Phoenix Knight Chief Craftsman] wasn't just for show, and he had already arrived at the answer by drawing on his past experiences.

"... Sigh, it's not impossible. But do we have to[go that far]?"

"This is just one possibility. We can approach it from other angles and see if there're other ways."

Eru immersed himself in his wild imagination and entered a daydreaming state. The boss couldn't help shrugging when he saw Eru acting like this.

Chapter 40: The Quickening of the Flying Dragon



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C.E. 1281, the season was changing as autumn comes.

Inside the capital of the new kingdom Fontaine, in a certain conference room within Lacepede Castle, Queen Eleonora surveyed the seated nobles and asked:

"How goes the war?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. First is the new model Revantier, their construction and deployment in the frontlines are almost complete, we're gradually increasing our forces... However, the enemy is changing their movements too, so we didn't make any progress at all."

Between the New Kuscheperca Kingdom wishing to reclaim their land and the Žaloudek Kingdom who wants to stop them, there has been no major movements, and time was allowed to simply pass by. Although the new kingdom launched several attacks during this period, they were all repelled by the tough armour of the black knights.

"On top of that, they no longer send out fleets of Levitate Ship, and are going back to guerilla tactics with a single ship once again. This had affected our supply line, and things aren't going well."

And as what had been reported previously, the enemy had strengthened the Levitate Ship by transporting Wizard Style machines, so even a single ship was formidable. The gulf in power between the new kingdom and Žaloudek Kingdom was already huge in the beginning, and this had grown worse with the war grinding to a stalemate.

"What about the Silver Phoenix Knights?"

"Yes. They are active on the frontlines as usual, but unfortunately, we couldn't break through the enemy's defences even with their help. We are still in the midst of finding an effective way."

After hearing the troubling reports, Eleonora lowered her head. She lacked experience and couldn't give any useful advice. Even if she wanted to rely on Martina who was assisting her, Martina wasn't familiar with military matters either. Strictly speaking, Emrys would be more suitable for such matters. In the end, Eleonora just listened to what they said and acknowledged them with a nod.

"I understand, I look forward to your hard work in the future."

"By your command!"

The Queen gave a passable response, and the nobles of Kuscheperca started going about their way. The nobles and knights in the various territories were doing everything they could to reclaim their land, but the fact remains that their efforts didn't yield any results worth speaking of.

On the western border of the New Kuscheperca Kingdom, along a small road that branches out from the Pan-Kucher highway, was a fort city. Even though it was just a branch off the road, it was laid rather well, big enough for carriages and even Silhouette Knights to travel on. In other words, this was more than adequate enough to be used as the most forward base against the Žaloudek Kingdom.

"Open the gate! Open — the gate!"

A cavalry unit waving the flag of the new kingdom reached the fort city, and the mechanical city gate was raised with a loud crank. Even Silhouette Knights wouldn't be able to lift this solid drawbridge, much less humans. It was barely operable through the use of the giant water mills situated near the river.

The captain of the cavalry entered the opened city gates and headed for the residential zone. The road from the gate wasn't connected to the city directly, but it leads to a maze of secondary walls. The platoon of Revantiers guarding the gate watched every move of the cavalry with keen eyes. They might be waving the flag of the new kingdom, but that didn't guarantee that they were friendlies. The cavalry took off their light leather helmets, and was only allowed passage after their faces were checked.

"... What!? Žaloudek sent knights to the frontlines?"

The fort city was ruled by a minor noble, [Baron Ladislao Mazquiarán].

His face turned sour on receiving the sudden news. After the purge by the Žaloudek Kingdom, there were few high nobles left inside the Kuscheperca Kingdom, leaving the mid to low tier nobles to support the new kingdom.

Due to the Žaloudek Kingdom prioritizing defence, both sides remained at an impasse after he was assigned here. The new kingdom was cautious and despatched a lot of scouts to keep a look out, and there have been recent reports indicating that several Silhouette Knight units were heading their way.

"Hmmp, those guys haven't come out for a long time. Are they tired of hiding

inside the city?"

It was clear that the Žaloudek Army was adopting a defensive strategy, and that suddenly changed, so it was only natural that the Baron was surprised. Were they trying something out, or they didn't need to continue their staunch defences anymore? There must be a reason why they took such a drastically different stance.

"The scale of the enemy forces?"

"Yes Sir. We have visuals of about one company."

"A company? That's not many... Are they just doing a recon by force?"

"They show no signs of slowing down, and are headed directly for this city. They didn't make any efforts to hide their advances."

It was becoming stranger by the moment. It was impossible to take down a fort city of this size with just one company. If it was the past when they only had the Resvant, it might be plausible, but they were now equipped with the latest machine models — the Revantier, and would not be defeated so easily by the Žaloudek's Tyrant.

"I don't get it, but no matter what they're up to, it's better to eliminate the attacking enemy."

Confused with no answers to his doubts, the Baron still made the decision to engage the enemy. No matter what, there was no reason to let the enemy come near their base. To be safe, he ordered twice the enemy's number, two

companies to attack.

The city gate opened with the dull sound of friction, and two companies of Revantiers charged forth with loud footsteps. Guided by the cavalry scouts, they moved towards the enemy position. At this point, they split into two groups to surround the enemy.

"No signs of an ambush, it's not a sneak attack by a Levitate Ship either...? "

Aside from the team supporting the assault unit, the other scout cavalry also spread out in all directions. They kept moving back and forth, on guard against enemy reinforcements, but there had been no reports as of now. On top of that, they made preparation for the air raids which they had gotten used to, with the Resvant Vidos deployed within the city, keeping constant watch over the sky. But there weren't any signs there either. As one of the bases at the very frontlines, the defences of this city were exceptionally tough.

"Something's amiss. Would the Žaloudek Army really attack this place with just this much forces?"

Even though the base forces felt a strong sense of doubt, the unit that has set off to attack was closing in on the enemy and about to make contact.

"Deploy back weapons, ready your shields — ! We will launch a preemptive attack!"

Their plan was simple, the leading group will engage the enemy, and a short while later, the other group would flank behind the enemy and backstab them. The leading group braced themselves for battle according to plan, and shortly

after, black giant knights appeared from the sparse forest. Their tall burly bodies gave off an intimidating aura. The core of the Žaloudek Army was formed from the Tyrants, so this was a very standard formation.

"Half assed magic projectiles won't penetrate their armour! Forget about suppressing fire, prepare for close quarters... What!?"

The team of Revantiers who was speeding up noticed something wrong. A single enemy Silhouette Knight was charging ahead of his allies, without any regards for formation.

"What is that? A decoy... Impossible. Don't the knights of Žaloudek know how to work as a team?"

"I don't know. He's either full of himself, or lost his composure. No matter what, leading the charge alone isn't wise. Let's take him down first then talk about it later!"

It caught them off guard, but what they needed to do remained the same. The team of Revantiers aimed their back weapons at the sole enemy unit charging them.

"What the hell... is that guy? His body is covered with [a bunch of swords], what a messy load out."

That knight was different from the standard Tyrant, which was rare in the Žaloudek Army. But what drew their attention was its equipment. His appearance was literally [a bunch of swords], and that enemy machine was covered with a large number of unnecessary swords, giving it a queer look.

"Since he only has swords, there's no need to hold back. Kill it off with our spells!"

The heavy weight black knights were slow. Since the [bunch of swords] charged ahead with its quicker pace, it couldn't count on support from behind. That might be so, but the Revantier team didn't need to hold back. They raised their back weapons and shot out bright crimson bullets repeatedly. The projectiles formed a wall of fire that headed straight for the [bunch of swords].

The response of the [bunch of swords] was as unusual as its loadout. It didn't slow down in the face such a murderous welcome, and charged straight ahead as it waved a drawn sword in each hand.

The attacking Revantier held their breath, questioning what they just saw. The shocking thing was, that [bunch of swords] evaded the projectiles as if he had seen through them, and only used his swords to deflect the shots he couldn't evade with amazing accuracy. His movements were kept to the minimum, and didn't affect his running speed in the slightest.

"That's too reckless! Alright then, vanguards, prepare to engage!"

The unusual movements of the enemy shook them, but the Revantier team still responded quickly. Even though it dodged the projectiles, it still didn't change the fact that it was outnumbered. The three Revantier vanguards retracted their back weapon, and raised their swords and shields against the [bunch of swords].

The sound of footsteps quickened, and the crystal tissues that powered the Silhouette Knights churned loudly, converting mana into destructive power —

the clash lasted just an instant. The next second, the new kingdom knights doubted their eyes once more. They saw as the arm of a Revantier flew into the air along with its shield, crystal shards falling out from its body as it slowly collapsed. On the other hand, the [bunch of swords] didn't slow down at all as it pounced on its next prey.

"What, this guy is!? S-Strong...!"

With movements that could only be described as amazing, the [bunch of swords] took down the 2nd and 3rd Revantiers. All three didn't even have the chance to cross blades with it before being cut down. The [bunch of swords] attacked the gap between their armour with precision to destroy the insides. Because his methods were too fast, even those who saw him up close couldn't understand what just happened. The new kingdom army only realized why the [bunch of swords] charged them alone now. They felt a different oppressive aura from him that was unlike that of the Tyrants.

"Ohh, my enemies! You also made new armour, but wouldn't it be boring if the ones sitting inside are clumsy?"

Despite achieving overwhelming results, the [bunch of swords] grumbled with dissatisfaction. His taunts through the loudspeakers infuriated the new kingdom army, but in the face of their difference in combat prowess, their wariness held them back.

The knight with strand weapons called by others as a [bunch of swords] — the pilot of the [Swordsman], Gustavo said from his seat once again:

"Sigh — I miss that red one, fighting with you lot is so boring!" With every step the Swordsman took, the swords on its shoulders clinked. And as it moved

forward, the Revantiers unconsciously moved back, pushed back by the pressure of just one enemy machine. When they realized this, the new kingdom knights steeled themselves and advanced. The difference in close quarter combat capability was too vast, so they mixed in spells attacks along with hand to hand combat, attacking in waves.

"Oh? Still want to continue my welcome? Haha! Good, I like that. Unfortunately, time's up... Black knights, spread out to the flanks. Envelop them from the outside and crush them!"

The presence of the Swordsman was too strong, and made the new kingdom knights let down their guard against the other black knights. The Tyrants entering the fray step pass the stationary Swordsman and closed in on the Revantiers. The machines on both sides have Eastern Mode technology, and their performance was about even. And that was why the difference in number caused by the Swordsman was that critical. Forced to face a disadvantageous situation, the new kingdom army was pushed to the brink.

At this moment, the new kingdom's secondary group arrived. Seeing the main group in trouble in so short a time after they commenced their pincer attack tactic, they hurried to rescue their comrades.

"Ahh — ? So you were planning a pincer attack. That's right, numbers are very important!!"

The Swordsman charged alone again, breaking into the center of the secondary group. What happened next was the same as before, with each flash of the Swordsman's blade, a Revantier would be slashed and fall. Their back weapons were rendered useless, and they would be crushed by the enemy's stunning swordsmanship when they get close. After 4 machines fell one after another, the secondary group was half destroyed.

On the other hand, despite his glorious exploits, Gustavo couldn't help saying frustratedly:

"No good. Are you all really knights? You aren't even good enough to be strawmen, Have some limits with how boring you can be."

His interest in the new kingdom forces dissipate drastically, and looked as if he was annoyed by the surviving members. Couldn't be bothered to deal with them any longer, he ordered the black knights to pursue them. The black knights who had finished off the main group approached the secondary team with heavy steps.

"Damn it... They are too strong...! We can't beat them... retreat, everyone pull back!!"

In the face of the advancing knights of black steel, the secondary team chose to back away. The Swordsman alone destroyed nearly half of their numbers, they were completely outmatched. If the enemy caught up, they would get wiped out. But for some reason, the Žaloudek Army didn't plan to kill them off. Although the black knights were slow, the Swordsman didn't pursue at all.

When he saw the losses the unit that returned has incurred, Baron Mazquiarán grit his teeth angrily. He despatched a force that was twice the number of the enemy, and definitely didn't underestimate the enemy. However, the enemy was more powerful than he imagined.

"Those people are elite! Damn it, we can probably beat them if I send out enough men... But I should avoid unnecessary losses. Damn it, this is

infuriating..."

He gave up on intercepting the enemy, and decided to stay in the fort to fight a defensive battle. They still had a battalion in reserve, and they could fend them off even if the enemy has reinforcements. — that was what he thought.

But... the enemy launched an attack, would they really turn back just like that?

With doubts in their mind, the new kingdom army made preparation around the fort for battle. Guards were deployed in front of the city, and the Resvant Vidos were assigned to sentry duties on the wall. When he saw the new kingdom army from afar, Gustavo deftly made the Swordsman shrug.

"Ho, it's been awhile since I gone all out, and I didn't control my strength. I wanted to just test them a little and draw them out but... Sigh~~ hide all you want. Hmm, seems like there are about three companies inside that fort. Hey, prepare the smoke signals, three of them."

When they heard Gustavo's orders, his subordinates quickly carried out their instructions.

"Alright, it's your turn, Dad."

Baron Mazquiarán could see the columns of smoke from the city walls.

"That's... a signal for their reinforcements? A Levitate Ship is probably coming. Everyone, prepare for anti air battle!! Don't let them take this city fort so easily."

On his command, the Tower Knights aimed their Silhouette Arms to the sky. They had experience in fighting Levitate Ships, and were adequately prepared. After a brief moment of silence, their prediction turned true — but they were only half right.

"What... is that?"

A black shadow appeared from the gaps in the clouds. When they saw a huge shadow on the ground gradually closing in, the guards in front of the city turned tense.

"As expected, it's a Levitate Ship. Do they really think one vessel can take us on...!?"

At this moment, they finally noticed that something was wrong. The never seen before aerial weapon, the [Levitate Ship] first made their debut during their invasion of the Kuscheperca Kingdom. The new kingdom army had fought them numerous time, and has a deep understanding of their capabilities. They also captured one that was still operational, so there was no way they could misidentify the outline of a Levitate Ship. However, the ship before them was different. The Levitate Ships they had encountered were all in the form of an upside down sailing vessel floating in the air, and they weren't wrong. It was true that most of the Levitate Ships in the Žaloudek Army were like that.

But the ship flying at them alone was an exception. The center of the ship bulged widely, and was the only part that retained the form of a ship. Protruding from the body was a slim head and tail, which didn't look anything like a ship. Sails on the left and right were fully deployed, making them look like the wings of a bat. The ship's body was covered in the armour glimmering with

steel, which overlapped in complicated patterns like the outer skin of a Silhouette Knight, forming [movable parts]. That's right, movable parts. The proof was that after they discovered the new kingdom army on the ground, it immediately [twisted it's entire body] to change its direction, and descended towards them.

As it got closer, it was possible to discern the details of the ship. The new kingdom army gasped, as they realized that the unidentified flying object approaching them could no longer be called a [ship]. If they had to describe it, it was closer to being a —

"That's a... Levitate Ship? But this is strange... it looks like a demon beast that had gone extinct since ancient times... a[drake]! What are the people in Žaloudek thinking? Are they insane!?"

In the Western States which is the cradle of humanity, many large demon beast had already been extinct for a long time. When humans dominated this land through the use of Silhouette Knights, they subjugated most of the demon beasts. Not just [drakes], for the Western States, demon beasts were sort of a legendary existence. And the terrifying appearance of the Levitate Ship before them was enough to stir up this memory.

Doroteo•Mardones glared at the fortress city and the new kingdom army deployed in front of it, and said with a deep voice:

"The fortress city of the new kingdom army... About a battalion in size. A most suitable first prey, they should be able to let us use our powers to the fullest extent. Lord Collazo, let me test this out!"

This ship mimics the form of the legendary [drake], with no sign of it being a

ship at all. However, it was still customized from a Levitate Ship, and the slender dragon head was similar to the [Figurehead] of a Levitate Ship, which consist of the top half of a Silhouette Knight. But the torso of this Silhouette Knight had the head of a dragon, it had the creepy appearance of a [half man half dragon knight]. Doroteo sat in the pilot seat inside the [Dragon Head], with many sound pipes around him that were connected to the various parts of the vessel. A report just happened to be coming in from one of his subordinates:

"Visual confirmation on the new kingdom army deployed on the ground preparing to engage us."

"Lower altitude, launch spell attacks!"

Doroteo yelled his command towards the sound pipe loudly. After his subordinates at the center of the vessel repeated their orders, they adjusted the Etheric Levitator.

"Beginning descent! Diluting Etheric Levitator... Adjusting concentration of Ether to one five above ground. Entering anti ground combat altitude!"

"Good, retract the wing sails and stop the blow engine. Entering high speed battle mode!"

Next, the opened sails on the left and right of the vessel changed. The inner skeleton of the sails were connected to the blow engine. The skeletal structure of these sails similar to the wings of a bat started to fold and retract.

"Sail wings retraction complete! Preparation for high speed battle mode complete!"

"We're going in, ignite the [Magius Jet Thruster] and maintain combat mobility!"

Before today, the propulsion of Levitate Ships was supplied by something called a blow engine, a Silhouette Arm that creates wind. Because this ship was bigger and more heavily armoured than previous models, the weight of the ship increased and wind power wasn't strong enough to move it. Even if it did move, it would be incredibly slow. In order to solve this problem, Horacio Collazo created a new propulsion device — which was the Magius Jet Thruster.

The overt level explosive flame spells roared, and a fire burst forth, providing the necessary power to push the large ship forward. However, the Magius Jet Thruster has a flaw, which was the tremendous amount of mana it consumes, so it couldn't be used too often. This ship would use its sail wings to cruise during patrols, and would switch to the Magius Jet Thruster during a battle, a hybrid type that utilize both modes.

Flames that sends out heat waves burst forth from the exposed back of the dragon after its wings had been retracted. The humongous object with its armour was extremely heavy, but the powerful propelling force still accelerated it. The alien ship that mimics the form of a huge ancient dragon bared its fangs at the new kingdom enemy as it dives at them. Doroteo glared at the holo monitor with bloodshot eyes inside the head of the ship. This battle was actually a [blade test], to prove whether this ship and him were powerful enough to kill the alien knight that murdered his master.

"So this is the Levitate Ship in full battle mode... [Flying Dragon Battleship【Vouivre】]! Let me see your power!"

When they saw the Flying Dragon Battleship retract its wings and accelerate, a sense of unease spread among the new kingdom army. They did set a strategy against Levitate Ships, but what was charging their way was an opponent that mimics a Flying Dragon. Baron Mazquiarán quickly issued orders to the knights who were at a loss.

"Ugh, that's just a bluff! Vidos team, prepare spell attacks!! Shoot it down if it dares to come near us!!"

When they heard their loud and firm commander gave the word, the soldiers fired spells into the sky even though they had yet to settle down completely. During this time, the Vouivre was still charging at full speed towards the center of the tight formation. It flew right over the heads of the Silhouette Knights, and descended so low it was almost touching the ground. Wizard Style Anculosa [sprout out] from all over the ship's body and started firing intensely at the ground. This was one step better than simply placing Wizard Style machines on the Levitate Ship, they were now part of the ship as a fixed artillery.

"Damn Žaloudeks, this is an abomination...! This is going beyond the demon beast of legends, did the lost of their commander made them lose their minds!?"

This was an efficient way of doing things, but the upper torso of the Silhouette Knights sprouting out from the ship caused an indescribable feeling of disgust to the new kingdom army. Not just that, the intense firepower from the Wizard Style machine caused tremendous losses to the ground units. After all, this might be just one vessel, but there were many Wizard Style machines sprouting from it.

"Waaarrghhh!? Impossible, there's just one enemy ship, how could it launch such devastating spell attacks!?"

In contrast, the Tower Knights' magic projectile attacks were limited in effectiveness. The Flying Dragon Battleship possessed armour defences that was [tougher than it looks], and could deflect multiple magic projectile hits easily. The Flying Dragon Battleship laid down intense fire on the ground as it flew over the new kingdom army, and then turned around immediately. The Battleship might look slow and clumsy, but it could move its head and tail deftly like a living being, and was more agile in its turn than normal Levitate Ships. Its movement was completely beyond the level of a ship, and was closer to that of Silhouette Knights.

After the first round of exchange, the Flying Dragon Battleship was mostly unscathed, while the new kingdom army took heavy losses. Doroteo was pleased by the results and issued the next attack command:

"We will now test out [melee combat]. Deploy [Dragon claw] and attack from the front. Increase propulsion!"

After receiving his orders, a giant arm-like thing at the bottom of the ship was deployed. It was a dragon claw larger than a Silhouette Knight in size. This was the biggest difference between the Flying Dragon Battleship and normal Levitate Ships, its close quarter combat weapon, [Combat Dragon claw].

"T-The monster is coming back!"

"H-How can it be so fast! Is that really a Levitate Ship...!? Forget it, turn back quickly! Take aim until it's almost on top of us, and shoot it down!!"

The Flying Dragon charging towards the defenders who changed the direction they were facing in a hurry. It soared over the heads of the Silhouette Knights

and extended its ferocious Combat Dragon claw. The acceleration of the Magius Jet Thruster and the incredible inertia of the ship's mass resulted in the dragon claw decimating the Silhouette Knights on the ground as if it was raking up leaves.

"Damn it! That's impossible, that ship has a claw!?"

"Curses, it destroyed the Revantier so easily...!? Could that be the incarnation of a real dragon!?"

It cleaned up far targets with spell attacks, and devastate enemy close by with its dragon claw. Wherever the Vouivre went, only the wreckage of Revantiers were left in the wake of its rampage. The speed difference between the two sides were too vast, and the new kingdom army was destroyed without even the chance to put up a fight. At this moment, the Flying Dragon Battleship's claw happened to catch a Revantier during its run through the enemy formation.

"A-Ahhhh! S-Someone save me..."

The next second, that Revantier was crushed with a pomf. The Dragonic claw wasn't just large, it was also full of strand crystal tissue, and could exert tremendous power output to match its huge size. It could even squash a Silhouette Knight through brute force. The unstoppable dragon claw left a clear trail of destruction through the middle of the new kingdom army.

"No good... Recall the Silhouette Knights back into the fort city! We will become food for that thing if this goes on... Even the dragon claw won't be able to break the fort walls!"

After seeing the formidable power of the enemy for himself, the Baron issued the order to retreat.

"Hmmp, they plan to fight a defensive fort battle? We need to teach them that such tricks are futile before our Flying Dragon."

Doroteo was pleased with the display of the Combat Dragon claw's might against the enemy, and was finally ready to go in for the final blow.

"Increase Ether concentration to three zero above ground."

"Roger, injecting Ether into Etheric Levitator, concentration rising!"

After dealing a lethal blow to the enemy, the Flying Dragon Battleship increased its altitude as it circled in the air, ready to unleash a devastating attack. Its target wasn't the Silhouette Knights, but the fort city itself.

"Ship bow, prepare to fire [Incineration Flame]!"

The thin bow protruding out from the front of the Flying Dragon Battleship which looked like a dragon's head opened its maw wide. Its ferocious appearance looked just like a living dragon, exposing a dark maw leading to the insides of the bow through rows of fang-like armour. Massive amounts of mana flowed into the emblem graf inside the maw, and flame erupted forth. The fire become more intense as it spew further out, until blazing flames covered the ground.

"Dragon... flame! How... is that possible...!?"

By breaking out of the mold of a Silhouette Knight, the Vouivre managed to turn the stupendously huge Silhouette Arms[Incineration Flame] into reality. It uses a large explosive flame spell to continuously shoot out flames. The fire raining down from the sky engulfed the fortress city, showcasing its powerful effect as a siege weapon.

It was a hellish scene at the top of the city walls. Even if the Silhouette Knights were covered in steel, the pilots were still human. Even the armour of the Resvant Vido, the Wall Robe looked fragile before this relentless assault. The outer skin was burned to crisp, while the human inside was either cooked alive or turned directly into ash. Just one round of flame attack annihilated the units defending the walls, with the charred vito spewed all over the place. Some of the half melted ones were still squirming on the ground, while those who managed to escape out of the attack range fled in panic. Vido was a Wizard style machine and moved slower than the black knights. Hence, they turned into sacrifices to the Flying Dragon's flame.

The Flying Dragon Battleship which had shown its enemy how feeble the city walls were in its eyes turned around, turning its sights on the city within the fort. None of the Revantier that escaped were spared, and the buildings burned. Neither the city walls or the stone buildings could withstand the fire attack, and after the Flying Dragon Battleship made a few sweeps, the city was razed to the ground.

"... This power... was beyond my imagination."

The Flying Dragon Battleship was the first large scale siege weapon in this world. Its horrendous results made even Doroteo who ordered the attack tremble.

"Leave the clean up to the ground units, we will return to base."

The Flying Dragon Battleship stopped spewing out flames after annihilating the enemy, and started to increase altitude. When it reached sufficient height and slowed down, it deployed its Wing Sails and entered cruising mode with its blow engine. They took to the sky leisurely, leaving the battlefield behind them.

The enormous body of the Flying Dragon Battleship might be suitable for large scale devastating attacks, but not for trivial clean up operations. They had already took out a lot of the enemy forces, and completed their mission.

"Incredible... With such powers in our hands, even the Demon God can't escape from us. Princess Catalina, we will definitely avenge the Prince."

The creator of the Levitate Ship — Horacio Collazo researched and developed from an angle never seen before in history. A new weapon that wasn't a Levitate Ship or a Silhouette Knight, something that should be called a man made Demon Beast, the [Flying Dragon Battleship]. The giant sails flutter with the wind, and the strange dark shadow disappeared into the clouds.

Shortly after, the Swordsman and the Black Knight unit reached the fortress city right after the Flying Dragon left. Gustavo surveyed the burning fortress city and grumbled:

"Dad, if you burn the entire city, we won't be able to use it. The dragon is more powerful than expected, but you have to use it properly."

He looked at the fortress city that couldn't serve as a base of operations any longer, and wondered what he should do.

The Vouivre won a splendid victory in its debut and set off for Delvincourt in high spirits. Even though it didn't suffered much damage, that was still its first mission. It had already been scheduled to undergo maintenance to avoid any breakdowns.

The creator of the Flying Dragon Battleship Horacio welcomed Doroteo and his crew at the docks with arms wide open to express his sincerity.

"Haha, Lord Mardones, how was it? Did the power of the Flying Dragon Battleship pleased you? From your face, I think it performed quite admirably."

"That is true. We just burned the remnants who call themselves the New Kuscheperca Kingdom into crisp, it's power is amazing! I will leave it at that for now, wonderfully done."

Doroteo answered with a nod, which pleased Horacio. In the past, the Levitate Ship could only take part in battle through transporting Silhouette Knights or having them onboard, the only weapon they had was the [catapult]. Even so, it was still a revolutionary weapon. However, the enemy's anti-air weaponry developed too fast, which highlighted the Levitate Ship's lack of offensive means. Thus, the Flying Dragon Battleship was bestowed with great combat potential. This vessel designed for combat was the final form of Horacio's ideal of the [Ruler of the Sky].

"That's marvelous. We can soar in the sky as we please now... Well then, please follow me. Princess Catalina is looking forward to your good tidings."

Horacio who came to the docks eagerly was also tasked to relay the summons. As he led Doroteo and company to the audience hall, they discussed

the performance of the Flying Dragon Battleship passionately.

"With the prowess of the Flying Dragon Battleship. Silhouette Knights are not a threat at all. We won't lose even if we meet that Demon God... It is regrettable that it wasn't ready in time to help Prince Cristóbal. If this was done before the battle of Missillier... No, it's useless to talk about that now."

"Hmm, how should I put this? This ship is designed with [fighting other Levitate Ships] in mind."

His casual words surprised Doroteo. Since he was the one who created the Levitate Ship, why was he thinking about combating other Levitate Ships?

"I would have never thought of that. Just who are you planning to fight?"

"Even though the Levitate Ship can be considered to be patented by us now, it had already been leaked to the new kingdom. It's not too much to plan in advance on ways to fight them correct? To create a Levitate Ship specialized for combat and worthy of the title of Ruler of the Sky, the problem of how to armour and arm it was a tough question. Keeping it in the form of a ship wouldn't do, and we didn't want to make it into a Silhouette Knight. So I decided to take inspiration from a certain source, and designed it after a demon beast."

"What remarkable resolve. But from the way you phrase it... Have the Flying Dragon existed since a long time ago?"

In the face of Doroteo's questioning that had turned a little shrill, Horacio scratched his messy hair and showed a half hearted smile:

"That's right, although the ship was actually made, it couldn't work. It was either too heavy to move smoothly, or defenceless against long range attacks, so I banished it into the archives."

His expression was ambiguous, but his eyes had a strong light in them, along with his unwavering confidence as the creator of the Levitate Ship.

"Unfortunately, the Steel Wing Knights suffered devastating losses and were almost wiped out. And the lesson we learned from their experience helped me solve many of the problems. The powerful propellor and the addition of Wizard Style machine finally reforged the Flying Dragon Battleship into the strongest ship ever."

"... Without that battle, this ship wouldn't exist?"

What Horacio said was very logical, so Doroteo's tone had a hint of depression in it.

"We will start carrying out the mission of the Flying Dragon, I will definitely avenge the Prince with the power of this ship."

He pulled himself out of his sullen emotions. Doroteo lives only for one thing, which was to seek vengeance against the enemy. At this moment, Horacio who was walking ahead stopped. With a faint smile on his face, he turned and said:

"Well, I don't need to bore you with the details of what the Flying Dragon can do. But assuming — if you encounter that rumoured Demon God... And if the Flying Dragon is not powerful enough..."

Doroteo's eyes were full of life. He nimbly dodged the wrathful gaze of the veteran, and his smile deepened and twisted creepily.

"Please soar high and far away. Without limits or restraints. The sky will protect the ruler, give him strength to defeat the enemy."

"Very well, I will keep your advice in my heart."

Doroteo walked passed Horacio with just these words, heading briskly into the audience hall. Horacio muttered softly, knowing very well his words would never reach anyone:

"Yes, only my Flying Dragon can reach the highest sky. No matter how powerful that Demon God is, no matter how much insanity is cramped inside its body, those who don't understand the truth of this world will be engulfed by it if they try to reach the highest peak with a single bound..."

His deep laughter echoed in the corridor.

Chapter 41: The Confrontation between the Demon God and the Flying Dragon



"Hey hey... What's going on here?"

Emrys couldn't help groaning as he studied the map laid out before him. On it were several merciless crosses that were freshly marked out, with its ink still wet.

Fontaine received several emergency reports. The crosses represent the

frontline bases they had lost in an extremely short time.

"Žaloudek Army is suddenly taking the offensive. Hmmp, how unpleasant... But leaving that aside for now, the affected area isn't simple! Each of these forts were fortified with Revantiers and Vidos!"

These forts they had lost had an adequate number of the newest model of Silhouette Knights. Even if the Žaloudek Army attacked en masse, it wouldn't fall so easily. These strange events shook them deeply.

"Did the Žaloudeks sent out a massive army? From the non specific targets, it could be the doings of Levitate Ships too... But adding in more ships won't faze the current Kuscheperca either, I can't make sense of this."

After several battles, the Kuscheperca had more experience with anti Levitate Ship battles. The Žaloudek Kingdom's Levitate Ship working in concert with the Tyrant was their fundamental tactic, and it couldn't gain much results now. On top of that, from the latest reports, they were conducting guerilla strikes, which wasn't suitable for attacking bases.

"After the victory in Missillier, we should have pulled ourselves together. But despite the new kingdom rejuvenating this far, our nation is still under threat. I think this is a very serious matter."

Martina's tense words made Eleonora's face turn gloomy.

"The fortresses we lost are completely destroyed... I heard only a handful managed to escape."

She could understand that sacrifices were inevitable in war, but a part of her still couldn't accept this reality. Seeing how moody she was, the people around her hesitated, wondering if they should ask for further details.

In this sullen mood, only one person pressed for details without any restraint. That was Eru.

"Since there are survivors, shouldn't there be some clues about the tactics the enemy is employing? If we don't figure this out, the disaster might spread even further."

"...! T-There is... All their testimonies speaks of a vessel similar to the [drake] of legends... A strange Levitate Ship attacking. The dragon spewed out fire and... incinerated the fortress."

The attack of the enemy was fierce, and the fortresses they targeted were razed to the ground. Despite deliberate investigations, the survivors either say a ship in the form of a legendary dragon attacked, or the dragon burned the city with its breath. These crazed testimonies gave the higher ups of the new

kingdom a headache.

The Silver Phoenix Knights felt similarly troubled by this. Eru folded his arms and fell into deep thought.

"This definitely means the enemy sent out a new model of Levitate Ships. But even if it mimics the form of a dragon... Would it become stronger all of a sudden?"

"Are they using Silhouette Arms to shoot out fire? That's probably the Levitate Ship loaded with Wizard style machines."

"Are there Silhouette Arms strong enough to raze an entire city? If there are, those things would consume too much mana, and be more unwieldy than Ikaruga."

Not just Eru, even Dietrich and Edgar shook their head with their arms crossed. Even the brilliant Silver Phoenix Knights couldn't deduce the enemy's true identity with just this bit of intel.

"We lack intel. Let's not make wild guesses, and assume the enemy has the capability mentioned in the rumours, and deal with this accordingly."

"Hmmp! That's right, since they're the enemy, we just need to defeat them all. Instead of splitting hairs, we should take action!"

"I think the young master should worry a bit more."

Emrys wasn't the only one who was hyped up, Dietrich, Edgar and Helvi were also thinking about it in terms of combat, their faces showing no signs of fear against the mysterious threat. Eru who was besides them ran his fingers gently across the map and said:

"I don't know how the enemy did it, but from the position of the fortress that has fallen, they show no signs of suddenly attacking our rear lines. If we head for the frontlines, we will meet them sooner or later. I will get the Silver Phoenix Knights ready for a campaign."

"Mr Ernesti, you're willing to take to the frontlines personally?"

Seeing Eru and the others deciding to act, Eleonora asked hesitatingly. The powerful and mysterious enemy had shown itself, and it would be wonderful if the strongest Silver Phoenix Knights were willing to scout them out.

"From our perspective, this is a great proposal... But considering how dangerous this is, will it be fine?"

"The ones who would be best suited to face against such unknown opponents would probably be me. I can't guarantee that I can solve the problem, but I will at least have a chance to take a stab at it."

The members of the Silver Phoenix Knights and Eru nodded. Eleonora stood tall with her back straightened, then said:

"I can only depend on your good will for now. I bid everyone in the Silver Phoenix Knights good luck and good hunting."

"Hmmp, they can still muster such forces after that terrible defeat, as expected of a grand nation. Alright Ellie, just leave it to us! We will crush their spirits!"

"Sorry to interrupt when you are giving such a passionate speech, but could you please hold the fort here, Young Master?"

Emrys stumbled forward with his arms still raised, then turned back with his eyes wide open:

"What!? Hey, Silver Commander, you're saying this now? I want to pulverise the wild ambition of those guys with my Gordesleo!"

Emrys bared his teeth, showing his fighting spirit in plain sight. But Eru shook his head firmly, turning down the Second Prince's wilful request.

"We don't know how powerful the enemy Flying Dragon is. But from the losses we have taken, it will be an intense fight. Young Master, please consider your position. Although it's unlikely, their next target might be Fontaine, we can't let the defences in this city and Her Majesty be too weak."

Although Emrys groaned during this time as a mean of final resistance, he still gave in and stayed in Fontaine. Eru then turned to Chid and said:

"You will be staying behind with the Young Master."

"Eru! I'm a part of the Silver Phoenix Knights too, how can you not count me in?"

He was probably overthinking it, but when he saw Eru's smile that had a hint of mockery in it, Chid couldn't help sighing unhappily. Eru whispered into his ear:

"You have an important secret mission. If Fontaine is attacked and the situation grows desperate... You need to pilot your Tzendrinble, and ensure the

Young Master and Her Majesty escapes safely."

Chid stared at Eru with a serious expression.

"If I do that... Leaving Ellie aside, I think the Young Master will resist stubbornly."

"You're the only one who can do this, Chid."

As expected, he was unhappy about being left in the rear by the Silver Phoenix Knights, but with Eru urging him so seriously, it was hard for him to refuse. In the end, the two of them stayed behind in Fontaine as the Queen's guards, and the Silver Phoenix Knights headed to the frontlines.

Eleonora watched Eru and company leave to prepare for their journey and said softly:

"I think we're relying on everyone in the Silver Phoenix Knights too much. We might be allied nations, but we should be the ones leading the campaign against the enemy... Or are we still too weak to defend ourselves?"

"Eru offered to go himself, so don't worry about it."

But Chid's words couldn't sooth her heavy heart.

The Silver Phoenix Knights headed to the workshop to make preparations.

"Okay Ernesti, I can see you are hyped up... tell me what you really think. What are you scheming?"

On the way there, Dietrich looked at Eru who was a head shorter than him and asked. His gaze was full of doubt because of his accumulated experiences so far.

"Well, the analysis of the enemy's technology is coming to an end. I'm feeling pretty good, and think it's time to take Ikaruga out for a stroll."

"Eru, Silhouette Knights aren't dogs, you don't need to take them for strolls."

Seeing Eru nod seriously, Helvi couldn't help hitting his head lightly. Dietrich who was behind the two of them looked up into the sky.

"I figured it's something like that... Are you serious?"

Although he already expected that, Eru's free spirited style still exasperated the people around him. They had no choice but to go along with the knight commander's hobby.

"That might be so, but since we're going, there is a good chance to win right?"

"Depends on the situation. Let's bring all the Missile Javelins we have along, and clash with them directly."

"Ernesti, even though our goal is to help our allied country, but isn't this plan too reckless?"

Edgar who had been listening to them absent mindedly joined in with a serious face when the topic about combat formation came up. Eru started with "that's true", and then said:"But, are you sure you want to let the new kingdom deal with this? The fact is, our allies have suffered serious losses and still couldn't figure the enemy out yet. Regrettably, just getting used to the new machine model is a big burden on them."

Edgar groaned. He understood this very well since he had fought alongside

them.

"In the end, the Levitate Ship is like the symbol of Žaloudek Army's superiority. Just like how we created the Eastern Mode, it won't be a surprise if they forge an even better ship ahead of us. Judging from how badly the forts were destroyed, this new Levitate Ship probably has a wide area attack, so sending in a large force would put us at a disadvantage instead. In that case, we should use a small elite unit to take on the large and powerful adversary — Isn't this the tactic we're most proficient in?"

As they chatted, the group reached the workshop. Before them were rows of Silhouette Knights from the Silver Phoenix Knights. Dietrich watched the Knightsmiths tuning the group of machines that seemed eager to move out as best as they could, and a ferocious smile appeared on his face.

"... I know how you feel, Ernesti."

Edgar raised his eyebrows slightly, and had no intention of rebuking him.

"We have the 3rd company with us. Considering the operation of the Missile Javelins, they are definitely the ones most suited for this."

"Leave it to us. No matter where we need to go, the 3rd company and I will send everyone there safely."

After a few exchanges, they reached the central area of the workshop. Eru waved his hands and said loudly:

"Everyone — Please gather here — "

He then grabbed a blackboard from somewhere and gave a simple briefing:

"... That's how it is. The Silver Phoenix Knights will move out in the highest readiness level. As for the destination, the enemy has been hitting the bases on the frontlines like this. Their movements are erratic, and we can't tell where they would strike next. That's why we will be splitting up into two groups."

Eru drew the two designated routes on the laid out map. He pointed to the northern route, then turned and said to everyone:

"The 1st and 3rd company will move together. The only thing certain from the intel we have is — the enemy is a powerful Levitate Ship. The 3rd company will adopt the [Blue Two] load out, 1st company please be ready for anything."

Edgar and Helvi nodded firmly. The boss behind them gestured with his chin, and several Knightsmiths ran off to make preparations immediately.

"Hmm? Then the 2nd company will be walking? What about you, knight commander?"

Dietrich stared at the other route with his head tilted and asked.

"I will be going with Di-sempai, Ikaruga will make up for your lack of anti-air capabilities."

"That would be more than sufficient."

"And me～! I want to go with Eru!!"

Ady raised her hands high besides the shrugging Dietrich to recommend herself. It was Dietrich and Eru's turn to look at each other.

"... That's how it is, Ady and I will join the 2nd Company."

"Understood."

After deciding on the team rosters, Eru turned and said to everyone:

"Since the 3rd company is joining them, the 1st company will be more mobile. I don't know which side will encounter the target first, so we have to play this by ear. Edgar-sempai, if the enemy is too strong, please do whatever you can to escape and bring back intel on them."

"I understand, being reckless isn't the only thing we're good at."

Edgar's gaze alternated between Eru and Dietrich, then nodded. He was making it obvious that he was "more worried about the two of you".

"Well, we won't have 3rd company's support and will be much slower. But it will be fine if we can defeat the enemy."

"Since we don't have a clear idea what the enemy is like, there is no guarantee we can win right? You're a captain of a company, so keep a backup plan in mind..."

The conversation between Edgar and Di slowly turned into a lecture. Eru who was besides them surveyed the entire group and concluded:

"The only thing left would be arranging for the supplies. We will set off once that is done."

The Tzendrinbles in the 3rd company trotted loudly into their formation, and the heavily armoured Kardatolles boarded the wagon behind the centaurs. If it was just one company worth of Silhouette Knights, the transport capacity of the 3rd company could still handle it. The rest of the Tzendrinbles were in anti-air mode, equipped with Vertical launched javelin thrower, with spare Missile Javelins, packed behind it.

Beside this formation was one Tzendrinble that was parked slightly further to the side. That was Ady's machine, which was outfitted with anti-air equipment. But because of the team composition, half of the space on the wagon had to be used to transport other cargo.

At this moment, the 2nd company showed up after finishing their preparation. Upon seeing Ikaruga that was fully armed like Tzendrinble, Guyalarinde shrugged deftly.

"Even with Ernesti and Ikaruga here, our anti-air capabilities would be significantly weakened without the 3rd company right? I switched the loadout on some of the machines on my team to Javelineer Style."

About half of the machines in the 2nd company didn't have any back weapon. They were fitted with Rail Arm for the firing of the Missile Javelins. As the Vertical launched javelin thrower was too big for normal Silhouette Knights, the firing mechanism was installed onto a single machine. Such Silhouette Knights were said to be customized for javelin shots. After Eru looked at the companies

around him that had finished their preparations, he nodded and said:

"Ara, if the enemy is just a normal Levitate Ship, we can deal with them even if an entire fleet came."

"Di, don't be careless now, this is just like hunting demon beasts. Understand the opponent, attack their weak point then defeat it. If we attack recklessly, we will be the ones that gets destroyed."

"So a highly intelligent demon beast that can fly in the sky? How annoying..."

After bidding each other farewell with idle chatter, the Silver Phoenix Knights set off on a campaign from Fontaine. They would be facing the mysterious [dragon] next, even though they possess high combat capabilities, they still needed to be on guard. The companies split up and set off on their assigned routes, heading towards the fort that was still safe as of now.

Eru and the 2nd company's Silhouette Knights unit headed west on foot.

The Silhouette Knights were 6 times taller than a normal human, and their

strides were similarly large, so they moved much faster than normal walking. However, they were far slower than the Tzendrinbles of the 3rd company that were moving together with the 1st company. During this time, the other group have already visited several bases.

They finally reached the vicinity of their destination. The slopes were gentle around them, and didn't offer any advantages to any sides. If forced to pick a side, the defensive unit would have a slight disadvantage as the terrain was easy for a large army to move in. After all, this was just a territory within the Kuscheperca, and wasn't really the frontlines.

"In other words, the Tzendrinbles could run around here freely."

"And the Levitate Ships can fly around freely."

"A battlefield without any cover will be tricky. Everyone be on your guard."

While Eru and the others chatted while advancing, Ady's Tzendrinble followed behind the 2nd company slowly, matching their pace. She suddenly raised the Tzendrinble's lance into the sky.

"... Hey Eru, look at that! Could that be..."

Looking in the direction where the tip of her lance was pointing, a thin column of smoke was rising. It goes without saying what that smoke meant.

"We... hit the bingo right away. Let's hurry over."

"I concur, knight commander. 2nd company, a battle is waiting in front of us, advance!!"

The 2nd company didn't bother with conserving their strength and started charging at full speed. Ikaruga which was behind them ignited the large Ether Reactor [Behemoth's Heart] which was in sleep mode, and the air intake valve churned strongly to operate the reactor. With a demon beast like howl from its churning heart, Ikaruga switched into combat mode, activated all the Magius Jet Thrusters on its body and took to the sky with a trail of flames behind it.

The advancing 2nd company went over the hill, and the entire fort city entered their field of vision. Grey walls stood amidst the sparse forest. In the sky above the walls was a squirming object moving slowly. By comparing it to the fort city, it was easy to tell that the object was very big.

"W-What is that!? The new Levitate Ship!? It's shape is weirder than I imagined, and resembles a dragon to such an extent!"

That thing spreads its wings widely to either side, sweeping up huge gusts of

wind. It's swaying tail and snake like neck made it look like a demon beast — it's torso was similar to a [drake]. At the same time, this was definitely not a demon beast. It's exterior was obviously manmade, such as the sails on its wing and the Silhouette Knights sprouting out from its body were definitely not a product of nature.

"Hey, look! It's opening its [maw]!!"

The Kardatolle besides Guyalarinde pointed out. Following the direction it was pointing at, he could see that [dragon-like thing] circling in the air was opening it's jaws wide at the fort city.

The next second, a glaring red flame poured out from its dark maw. Explosive flames on a scale completely beyond that of Silhouette Knights and Silhouette Arms rained down on the fort. The defenders didn't stand a chance against this outburst of fire, and the fort being surrounded by city walls only made the fire within the fort burn even more intensely.

"Damn Žaloudeks, they created that monster...! Hmm? That is... this is bad."

Even the 2nd company renowned for their bravery could only stare dumbfoundedly at the fort being engulf in a sea of fire. Only the keen Dietrich noticed the subtle changes — soldiers and Silhouette Knights from the New Kuscheperca Kingdom fleeing from the fort..

"Survivors! We need to... save them."

For an instant, a past memory filled Dietrich's field of vision. Students were attacked by a division sized demon beast during training, giant knights stepping forth to protect the children from the powerful demon beasts that spelled certain death. He would never forget his starting point, and this was how similar the tragedy happening before him was to the events back then.

"...! How can I allow this to happen again!!"



Guyalarinde charged without hesitation, and the 2nd company followed his lead. There was no need to talk, they could understand each other's thinking.

However, the fort city was still a frustrating distance away. Not only was it out of spell attack range, even the silver nerves guided Missile Javelin couldn't reach it. They need to be closer to that humongous object before they could attack. With running being the only thing they could do, Dietrich couldn't help gritting his teeth.

In the meantime, the mechanical dragon soaring in the sky had turned around, targeting its next prey on the ground. Compared to the speed of a Levitate Ship, a sprinting Silhouette Knight was good as stationary. The gigantic draconic claws reached for the ground, replicating the stance of the legendary creature, emitting killing intent as it descended from the sky.

"Damn it!!"

Guyalarinde's outreached hand couldn't grasp anything.

Just when he thought those draconic claws would tear the poor new kingdom army souls apart, a flaming javelin flew through the air. The powerful flame javelin was far stronger than normal magic projectiles, even beyond that of an Overed spell. It also has amazing range, and the Flying Dragon that had been ravaging the battlefield swerved to dodge for the first time. When it saw

multiple flaming javelins flew at it one by one, it gave up on its ground attack, and left after doing a flip.

"Sword Cannon, it's Ernesti! That was close, it's fortunate that you're here..."

Loud explosions rang out above the new kingdom army. The trailblazing Ikaruga circled in the sky, and returned to the 2nd company after checking that the people were evacuating away from the destruction of the dragon. The Demon God reduced the power in its Magius Jet Thrusters and landed.

"Di-Sempai! Gather the surviving units, and lead them away from here. With that Levitate Ship's speed and offensive powers that rivals a demon beast, they will die if they stay here!"

When he heard Eru order a retreat immediately, Di couldn't answer for a moment, but quickly nodded and replied:

"... Understood. We will withdraw the units and abandon that fort. Relay the orders! Send out horses and tell the base behind us to prepare for our arrival. Alert them that in the worst case scenario, they will need to be ready for the largest anti-air battle ever!!"

The cavalry traveling with the unit galloped off in accordance to Dietrich's instruction. While they were making preparations, the Flying Dragon in the air

glared at the ground once again. As if it was responding to the Flying Dragon, Ikaruga ignited its Magius Jet Thruster, ready to take on the Flying Dragon.

The opponents of the Silhouette Knight 【Ikaruga】 were Eru's preys. If there was a battle between giant humanoid weapons 【robots】, he would not retreat. He knew it was futile, but Dietrich still said to Eru's back:

"Are you going?"

"I have to draw its attention away from the ground, so I have to distract it with an aerial battle. The only ones who could do that is Ikaruga and me."

Dietrich gritted his teeth hard. He had to watch idly by again as Ernesti engages the enemy directly. He knew his own capabilities and that there was no way he could take part in the battle between the giant flying dragon and the Demon God

"Roger, knight commander. Don't worry about the things on the ground, and give that dragon a good pounding."

"Thank you sempai. Fufu, Ikaruga needs to go all out this time..."

With an explosive sound, Ikaruga flew up high. The Demon God turned into a comet heading straight for the Flying Dragon.

"Okay, ever since Levitate Ships appeared in this world, I already predicted that armoured vessels... [Battleships] will appear too. But I didn't expect this huge mobile weapon. I understand the direction it's evolving towards, but I never imagined it will become this powerful so fast. Is there a reason behind this?"

Eru felt a shiver as he sat inside the cockpit of the Ikaruga. It wasn't out of fear, but stemmed from tremendous joy towards the prospect of [the humanoid weapon【Ikaruga】 fighting against a giant machine].

"Fufufu, you're just right as my opponent. My Ikaruga won't lose so easily!!"

After Ikaruga took to the sky, the new kingdom army escaped towards the 2nd company. Guyalarinde stood at the very front of his unit and bellow out commands, and just barely maintained control.

"Gather here and fall back quickly...! We will just be a burden to the knight commander if we stay here."

The new kingdom army whose base had been burned had no other choice. Obeying the 2nd company's command, they organized themselves and pulled

back. There was no telling how much time Ikaruga could buy, but they need to send the new kingdom army to safety with whatever time there was.

"Alright, 2nd company, let's escort them... No wait, what is that signal!?"

Dietrich who was observing the Flying Dragon's movement yelled suddenly. That ship which mimicks the form of dragon was glowing with bright lights on various parts of its body. They flickered with a fixed frequency, and were obviously transmitting a message.

And the answer was revealed shortly after.

Several Levitate Ships flew over the burning fortress city, making a beeline for them. Those weren't Battleships, but cargo ship types.

"A secondary team! Pursuers? We can only walk, and will be caught sooner or later."

That's correct, the Flying Dragon wasn't the only force the enemy committed here. Normal Levitate Ships could ferry ground forces too. When they saw the retreating new kingdom forces, they formed up and gave chase.

The sound of the wind made by the Levitate Ships echoed in the sky. They dropped Silhouette Knights from the opened hatch at the bottom of the ship, sending the disorganized new kingdom army to the very brink. The ones that landed on the ground were the mass produced Tyrants of the Žaloudek Kingdom, and one Silhouette Knight that looked different from the other. On that queer machine were swords of various sizes.

"Don't stop! Just focus on running away... 2nd company!!"

Guyalarinde that was running alongside the new kingdom army stopped, then turned back and drew its swords. He pointed them at the approaching black knights.

"We will be the rear guards. Protect our comrades, do your duty as a knight. Aid our friends, if the enemy threatens them, we will crush them all!!"

"Yeah!! Crush them all!"

The second company echoed out loud as they picked up their weapons to cover the new kingdom army behind them. When the black knights saw part of their prey stop, they charged in with renewed vigour.

In the sky was the clash between the Flying Dragon and Demon God, on the ground was the battle pitting the black knights against the 2nd company of the

Silver Phoenix Knights. The intense fight was about to begin.

The Flying Dragon turned around, and surveyed the battlefield from the sky.

On the ground, the black knights sent out by the Levitate Ships were blocking the escape route of the new kingdom army. Their base has been destroyed, and there weren't any ambushes lying in sight. The lives of the new kingdom army were like a candle in the wind. In contrast with the overwhelming advantage on the ground, a sinister existence had appeared in the sky.

"That's..."

That was a Silhouette Knight flying in the sky with flame trailing behind it. That alien didn't have any Etheric Levitator or wings to soar in the sky, as if it was mocking the laws of this world. This lone Silhouette Knight charged the huge dragon hovering in the sky — the flagship of the Žaloudek Kingdom's [Jade Dragon Knights] — this Vouivre. It showed no fear towards the Flying Dragon Battleship that just razed an entire city.

"Oh, ohhhh... T-That's...!!"

Inside the Dragon Head cockpit at the front of the Vouivre, Doroteo glared at the alien displayed on the Holo monitor, and spitted as if he was about to vomit blood. As far as he knows, there was only one such extraordinary existence in this world.

"...It's the Demon God. Demon God, the sworn enemy who murdered the Prince, my sworn enemy!! To think we will meet so soon! This Flying Dragon was created in order to end you, feel the power of its flame!!"

The Demon God was his sworn enemy. Not only did it rescued the Kuscheperca royals in Fontaine, it also destroyed Doroteo's Levitate Ship by itself and killed his master, Prince Cristóbal in battle. The agitated Doroteo could no longer keep his demeanor as a veteran soldier, and his expression became that of an enraged avenger.

"Enter high speed battle mode! Give it your all everyone, don't let your guard down because our adversary is a single Silhouette Knight. If we are careless, even this Flying Dragon might lose!!"

Doroteo issued deafening orders from his cockpit, and the Flying Dragon Battleship immediately went into high speed battle mode. It retracted its sail wings and shot out flames from its tail end. The massive body started accelerating from the explosive propulsion.

When he saw the Flying Dragon Battleship accelerating unlike any Levitate Ship he had seen before, Eru stared with his eyes wide open.

"Those flames, that speed! Are they using the Magius Jet Thruster!?"

Eru's slender fingers danced on his keyboard, adjusting the mana distribution. Most of the mana generated by the large reactor got channeled into the Magius Jet Thruster, readying himself for mobile combat. Eru could feel the angry roar of the reactor and looked at the Flying Dragon with a serious face.

"For some reason, I think that dragon-like thing is staring hard at me, and this isn't normal hostility? And it's ignoring the fleeing troops and started chasing after Ikaruga immediately... It knows Ikaruga?"

It's obvious that Doroteo's angry roar wouldn't reach him though. But Eru seemed to realize something and smiled boldly.

"I see, there's no need for two rulers of the sky huh? They are so into it that they prepared a huge weapon after all! Don't worry, the Magius Jet Thrusters, Sword Cannon, Rahu Fists... I will use everything at Ikaruga's disposal to defeat my foe!!"

The Magius Jet Thruster accelerated intensely, pushing Ikaruga into the air. Even though the thinking of both parties were so out of phase that it was

pathetic, it spurred overflowing fighting spirit from them, and the fight between the dragon and Demon God thus begun.

The Flying Dragon Battleship and Ikaruga closed in on each other. Ikaruga's Sword Cannon might have very long range, but its accuracy was higher when it was nearer; For the Flying Dragon Battleship, a Silhouette Knight in the air was too small a target. To bring out their best offensive attack, both parties needed to get closer in order to be more effective.

"Prepare spell attacks! Bombard that thing with magic projectile and destroy it!"

Doroteo ordered a pre-emptive attack. Machines specialized in spell attacks, **【Anculosa】**, [sprouted out] from all over the Flying Dragon Battleship and aimed their back weapons forward. The glow from mana flashed and blazing magic projectiles were shot out. Ikaruga raised its sword in defence, and after swatting a few shots away, it started dodging. The Flying Dragon kept on shooting, and Ikaruga wouldn't be able to counter if it tried to deal with the shots seriously. The Magius Jet Thrusters roared, and Ikaruga started flying in complicated patterns. It evaded the magic projectiles and created some space.

"You aren't the only one good at spell attacks."

The soaring armoured samurai pointed the Sword Cannon in its hand forward, and the blade parted in the center. The emblem grafts within the blade emitted huge amounts of mana. A powerful Overed level spell formed into a bright

crimson ball of flame, and was shot out. The fiery magic projectile flying through the sky was powerful, but Doroteo didn't back down.

"Demon God, I know very well how powerful your spells are! Don't look down on us, you think that will work on this Vouivre? Prepare the [lightning whip (Zafar Namah)] and blast that down!"

In response to that order, the Anculosa retracted their back weapons and raised the Silhouette Arms in their hands. With an appearance of several daggers sprouting out of its base, this was the lightning type Silhouette Arms — [Zafar Namah]. The lightning generated by magic phenomenon was immediately shot towards the approaching magic projectile.

The purple lightning struck the ball of flame, and they blossomed in the air. The web of intercrossing Zafar Namah served the function of a tight defensive shield, and not a single magic projectile harmed the Flying Dragon's hull.

An attack that nullifies other attacks — When Eru saw this new weapon he had never seen before, his emotion became even more heightened.

"Completely unfazed by magic projectiles!? I heard they used lightning as a defense, but didn't expect it to be this powerful. Seems like I have to use my second trick to destroy giant weapons!"

Eru gave up on firing magic projectiles from a distance, and pushed Ikaruga forward instead. The next second, a fierce explosion rang out, and Ikaruga disappeared, leaving only an after image behind that flickered like a fire before disappearing. The Magius Jet Thruster churning at full speed pushed Ikaruga forth like an arrow as it pierced through the sky.

Although an alien shaped flaming Silhouette Knight was flying at him with incredible speed, Doroteo didn't panic, and a brave smile appeared on his mouth instead.

"If range attacks are ineffective, you will choose to close in next. This is your miscalculation! Anculosa, use [Zafar Namah] and crush that fool!"

Ikaruga charged right before the Flying Dragon and raised its weapon, ready to slash it. But before it could swing its sword, a thundering sound boomed out. Not only could the [Zafar Namah] block the magic projectiles, it could shoot down the approaching Silhouette Knights too, destroying everything it comes into contact with.

"You still have this trick up your sleeves!!!"

When Eru saw sparks appearing everywhere on the Flying Dragon, just before he deployed the Sword Cannon, he turned around the magius jet thrusters, as a result of the violent braking, magic projectiles were randomly shot out. These projectiles made up of explosive flame magic burst apart the instant it touches the lightning, and blossomed into elegant balls of fire in the sky.

"Damn Demon God, to actually dodge at such close range! You might have survived the lightning, but the Flying Dragon is just showing its true prowess now!!"

Ikaruga turned its thrusters to the back once again, and closed in before the Silhouette Arms could fire again. It raised its sword against the gigantic Flying Dragon that filled its entire holo monitor screen, and the Sword Cannon connected solidly.

"Can that huge body dodge from such a close distance!?"

"Don't look down on me, it's just a tad near...!"

At this moment, Eru still had some misconceptions. The Levitate Ship in the past might be able to fly, but they were still normal ships without any means of close quarters attacks. However, the design of the Vouivre overturned this logic. This ship built for direct combat took many liberties in design, and its flexible body was a powerful weapon, and why the Flying Dragon did a body charge.

"Woaahh!? It's intimidating appearance isn't just for show!"

In the face of the approaching massive body, Ikaruga had to exert the full

power of his Magius Jet Thruster to barely get away. The Demon God and the Flying Dragon met in the air, and passed each other by quickly.

"With this much difference in mass, I won't be able to escape unscathed if we collided. A Levitate Ship can actually be used to fight like this..."

Eru grumbled but didn't stop controlling his thrusters deftly, changing Ikaruga's direction. In terms of mobility, the smaller Ikaruga had the advantage. Even if the Flying Dragon Battleship was faster than other Levitate Ships, it would still need some time to turn around. When Eru realized this, Eru attempted to attack it from behind and saw the Flying Dragon made a surprising move.

In the past, the Levitate Ship changed direction by using the blow engine to create wind that pushes the sails. Because the blow engine's power output was limited, the ship couldn't be said to be swift. However, the Flying Dragon utilized the full potential of its unique design, and adopted a completely different maneuvering method. It maintained the thrust from behind, and turned around quickly in a tight circle, just like how it moved during the battle earlier.

"Wow, how nimble. So it's going to charge again?"

The Vouivre that turned around let out a loud bursting sound and started accelerating. It was obviously trying to ram with its body again.

As the magic projectiles and lightning strikes collided in the air, the Demon God and the Flying Dragon shortened the distance between them. In the face of the Flying Dragon charging at full speed, Ikaruga was moving horizontally. The faster they moved, the harder it was to react to any changes. Eru was planning to get further away to evade the charge of the Flying Dragon Battleship, but the Flying Dragon made a new move at this moment.

"Too naive, Demon God! Prepare the draconic claws! Tear him to shreds!"

The Flying Dragon Battleship started deploying the gigantic device folded underneath it, and the ferocious weapon that had torn apart many Silhouette Knights showed its claws. The free moving giant draconic claws reached for Ikaruga that was trying to pull away from the Flying Dragon. When he saw the giant draconic claws big enough to seize a Silhouette Knight right before him, Eru shivered. The next second, the thruster on Ikaruga's shoulders turned and shot upwards, pushing him down.

Its weight and the push of the Magius Jet Thruster caused Ikaruga to fall at a drastic speed. After escaping the draconic claw, it reignited its thruster to maintain stable flight.

Inside the cockpit, Eru exhaled the breath he had been holding.

"... Fufu, hufufufufu. I was just testing it a little, and that's a really strong

adversary. Not only is it agile, it is hard to pursue and attack it. Its lightning defence can block magic projectiles and even melee strikes. Ikaruga won't be able to go near it recklessly... an opponent worth challenging."

The content of his words seemed to be painting a situation of despair, but Eru's face didn't look troubled at all. He was all smiles, and shining brightly from joy. The reason was simple, he had went absolute madman mode. Going through this trial with his beloved machine was a joyous thing for him — but the problem was, the more arduous the trial, the more motivated he would be.

As if it was resonating Eru's hyped emotions, the thrusters roared loudly, pushing Ikaruga to new heights. With burning fighting spirit, the Demon God started a dance with the dragon soaring leisurely in the sky.

The criss cross of purple lightning and explosive flames drew random trails in the air.

The lines that looked like a doodling of a child was formed through devastating attacks. A battle that shouldn't exist in this world was ongoing in the air, and Gustavo who was seated within the Swordsman couldn't help grumbling:

"How scary. It is actually fighting dad's Flying Dragon on equal grounds, that Demon God is more powerful than the rumours says. Hmm — I want to take

him on too."

That lone Silhouette Knight was actually holding up its own against the Flying Dragon that incinerated an entire battalion of Silhouette Knights without any regards against fort defences. It was an incredible sight, but seeing is believing.

"Swordsman can't help on that end anyway, I should get on with my job — "

On his holo monitor was the New Kuscheperca Kingdom army desperately retreating. They were the people who fled from the burned fort city, routed and defeated. What he needed to do was to give chase and take down as many of them as he could. Gustavo wondered why were all the battles he encountered so boring? This wasn't even a hunt, but the dull task of pulling weed from a yard.

However, it was different this time. A rear guard unit popped out as if it was covering the new kingdom army's retreat. They remained in control despite the overwhelming disadvantages, and positioned each machine masterfully in defiance of the Žaloudek Army's deep formation. It was clear from their movements alone that this group was strong. Gustavo's face twisted from glee. From how happy he was to meet resistance, he was a hopeless battle maniac.

"Woah, awesome! That's more like it, or I won't feel hyped up — !"

The rear guards were made up of Silhouette Knights that differed from the new kingdom army, and looked plain and low key. Normally, Silhouette Knights weren't just weapons of war, but also a means of flaunting military might of a nation, so each nation would add adequate amount of ornaments to it. However, aside from the large red crosses on the torso of the machines, the rear guards didn't have any other prominent features. Gustavo thought they looked familiar, and watched with his head tilted. When his gaze fell on the machine at the middle of the enemy formation, he opened his eyes wide immediately.

"Hey hey hey hey. That guy... Isn't that red guy that [dual swords]!? Hee, hehe, what a coincidence!! To think we will meet here. Hey, that red one's mine! You guys deal with the rest of the lot!"

Right after saying that, the Swordsman ignored the Tyrant's pace and speeded up. He charged right into the center of the 2nd company which was acting as rear guard, heading straight for the dual wielding **【Guyalarinde】**.

"En garde!!"

The Swordsman drew out a dagger from the blades of assorted sizes strapped all over its body, and threw it at blinding speed. It might be a dagger for a Silhouette Knight, but it was actually a massive hunk of steel. The tip of the dagger curved precisely through the air with a low whistling sound.

Guyalarinde was surprised by the pre-emptive attack from the Swordsman

that charged right into the middle of the formation, but it still reacted quickly. Using small movements, it raised its sword to parry the dagger. If it moved too much and loses its balance, it might not be able to withstand the follow up attacks, that's why it only used the minimal movements. The dagger hit the flat of the blade and was deflected with a sharp clank. In that short moment when the sword was raised, the Swordsman closed in on Guyalarinde.

"Haha — ! Dual swords!! We meet again, what a touching encounter! Come, let us continue our last battle!!"

"Why the hell are you here, [sword bundle]! I'm not happy about seeing you at all!!"

Swordsman used its running momentum to attack head on. The moment Guyalarinde received the blow, it turned to divert the force away to minimize the impact. The two Silhouette Knights clashed with their blades, and kept changing their position as if they were dancing in a circle. The inertia from their turn would be transferred to their next attack, which would be just as strong as the previous strike.

Both parties knocked away their opponent's blade, and changed positions in a dazzling blur as they continued to attack. The intense clash of weapons formed an area where others couldn't intrude into easily.

As the duel which was as fierce as a storm continued, the Tyrants that were a step slower pounced on the rear guards.

"Charge, charge! Don't let the enemy escape, crush them!!"

The black knights primary mode of attack they took pride in was to charge with their huge and heavy body. It goes without saying that Resvants were no match for them, and might even take down a Revantier in one blow. However, before them were battle maniacs who didn't flinch in the face of potentially lethal attacks dealt by their heavily armoured foes.

"Hahhh! You're not the only ones who can charge!!"

They were the 2nd company of the Silver Phoenix Knights. They didn't back away, and charged forth with their back weapons firing instead. The two forces collided in a shower of sparks, the units from the 2nd company were equipped with powerful weapons, that even the black knights couldn't take them lightly. In the end, the two forces were locked in a messy brawl.

"Tch, it turned into a tangled brawl. I guess it's fortunate that they didn't break through..."

"Hoh, dual swords! You can spare the time to look away!?"

Dietrich who had a clear view of his surroundings backed away quickly, and a

slash went through the space he was just standing in. The unusually fast blade left the air shimmering, and caused a shower of sparks and high pitch squeaks of friction. That blow from the Swordsman grazed the armour of Guyalarinde, as the crimson knight quickly changed direction and stepped forward. Once it was certain that the enemy's strike had been dodged, it countered deftly. But the Swordsman expected that and riposte the slash easily, and the offenses switched over once again.

Both the Guyalarinde and the Swordsman were Silhouette Knights that dual wielded, and their exchanges continued without any pause. They were developed under different circumstances, but both sides were specialized offensive orientated machines, and their tactics naturally prioritized on the ways to land their own blades onto the enemy.

"Really, just how energetic is he... If this goes on, my machine's mana would probably run out first."

After a very heavy clash, the two machines break away as if they agreed on that beforehand. There might be some variations, but machines that used the Eastern mode strand crystal tissues would consume more mana. Nonstop movement means that mana would be depleted at a substantial rate. The two machines that had limited mana pools churned their Ether Reactor at full speed in order to replenish their energy, and the loud sound of the intake valves echoed out loud.

"The pilot is disgusting, but this is still a tough fight."

"Don't be so flustered, dual swords, my blades are great. I am invincible as long as I have swords. I'm impressed that you held up for so long. I thought the match would have been decided a long time ago if I got serious."

Dietrich kept quiet unhappily. Gustavo sounds like he was joking, but he had proven to be more than just talk after all their battles. Gustavo insistence on only using swords due to his love for them made him stand out prominently in the Žaloudek Army. A queer man like him could only step onto the battlefield because of his overwhelmingly skills, and he stood tall among others by his own merit alone. Dietrich absolutely doesn't want to lose to such a weird opponent, he was a veteran who had fought in countless battles with his trusty blades after all. That might be so, but being able to put up a fight doesn't mean he could win.

"Thank you for the compliments. The problem is... I'm being tied down right now."

Dietrich didn't let down his guard against the Swordsman as he observed the situation around him. The 2nd company was evenly matched against the black knights, but their movements seemed constraint, probably because they had to cover the retreating new kingdom army.

They had achieved their objective of stalling the pursuers, but the duty of the rear guard was to retreat too, or this would become a battle of attrition.

"We can't drag this on anymore, we have to fall back. It's time to decide the match."

After resolving himself quietly, Dietrich activated his back weapon. Guyalarinde's back weapon [Kamtha] could deal the greatest amount of damage at close distance. He didn't want to use it because of the mana expenditure, but Dietrich thinks this was the time to do so.

After a short respite, he recovered a bit of mana. Just when Guyalarinde took its stance and got ready to finish his opponent off in one shot, the Swordsman acted first. It threw out daggers it had seemingly pulled out of thin air.

The Swordsman wasn't aiming for Guyalarinde's body, but its shoulders, where the Silhouette Arms were. The fragile Silhouette Arms would definitely break from this direct attack. The shocked Dietrich deflected the dagger flying at him at the last moment, and the Swordsman used this chance to close in.

"Hahaha! That toy is very convenient, but the direction of its aim is obvious!"

Guyalarinde could only defend arduously after the initiative was taken from him. Dietrich needed to concentrate hard to deal with the Swordsman's attack that came like a storm, and couldn't spare the effort to use the Silhouette Arms. Both of them were locked in heated combat again, expending mana quickly.

The 2nd company pulled back slowly as it fought. The new kingdom army had not retreated far enough yet. Relegated to taking the defensive because of their mission to cover this retrograde action, the 2nd company's movements seemed lackluster.

While the Žaloudek Army and the 2nd company battled intensely, the fight between the Demon God and Vouivre was gradually moving away. With both parties battling in the air with Magius Jet Thrusters, the Silhouette Knights running on the ground couldn't keep up at all. Just a single fly past would result in a great shift in positions.

"Really now, they are moving so fast! I finally caught up."

Ady chased after the monsters in the sky with all her might in her Tzendrinble. Even though the centaur knights took pride in their speed, that was limited to the ground. If the Demon God and Flying Dragon Battleship didn't slow down because of their aerial battle, she would have taken much longer to catch up. Ady stared at the reticle displayed on the holo monitor, then activated the equipment installed on the Tzendrinble.

"Go Mi-chan【Missile Javelin】, we need to help Eru win the fight! Target locked, launching!!"

It was the largest weapon equipped on the Tzendrinble — Vertical launched javelin thrower. In order to use its powerful anti-air offensive capabilities, she didn't hesitate locking on to the Flying Dragon. The rail arms opened, and lethal javelins shot into the sky with a trail of flame. The Missile Javelins drew a large

arc in the air, then made a beeline for the Vouivre under Ady's control.

The flaming javelins fired from the ground were very prominent, but were detected quickly by the sentry at the bottom of the Battleship.

"How annoying, it's javelins! The Anculosas below are to engage, take them down!"

Doroteo didn't hide his frustration when his battle against the Demon God was disrupted, and yelled. The Anculosa protruding from the ship's hull activated their [Zafar Namah], striking the javelins with lightning. With every thunderous boom, a Missile Javelin was shattered and fell.

"... Since it can block the Sword Cannon, I don't think this will work so easily. Reload now, hurry!"

Ady frowned as she watched the Missile Javelin break down one by one, but other than that, she appeared unfazed. After observing the battle between the Flying Dragon and Ikaruga just now, this much was enough to distract its attention. At this moment, the Silhouette Gears team on the chariot towed by the Tzendrinble shouted with grief:

"We're going as fast as we can, it will still take some time. Wait... Hey Ady, isn't the Flying Dragon's moving a little strangely?"

In the direction the Silhouette Gear was pointing, the Vouivre was obviously maneuvering in a way that was different than before. The dragon that was locked in combat with Ikaruga in the sky had turned its gaze to the ground.

"... Erm — doesn't this looks bad?"

"You think the Flying Dragon Battleship is afraid of such pitiful attacks? What an eye sore. If there is only one of those horse things, then I will just destroy it!"

Ady's ominous feeling turned true. The ship turned towards the ground in accordance to the orders from the Dragon Head, and the Flying Dragon Battleship started descending. The Anculosas all over the hull aimed at the Tzendrinble that had turned to flee, and started firing magic projectiles at it. Destructive flames started erupting around Tzendrinble which was galloping at top speed.

"The spell attacks are intense! But don't look down on Tzen-chan's speed!"

"You think that horse can escape the Flying Dragon?"

The Flying Dragon Battleship descended until it was almost ground level and extended its massive claws. The spell attacks limited where Tzendrinble could

go, and the enemy was planning to crush it with the draconic claws.

The Flying Dragon Battleship attacked its prey with its menacing claws. When its thrusters spit out flames, there was a sharp screech as the claw scratch across the ground.

"Woooahhhh, its here, and closing in... We will get smashed! Ady, speed up! Its gaining on us — !"

The gradually approaching claws and storm of spells sent the Motor Rad unit on the wagon into a panic. They couldn't withstand either the draconic claws or the magic projectiles.

Ady meandered the Tzendrinble she was piloting and dodged the spells deftly, but that slowed her down too. The draconic claws inched even closer, and the Motor Rad unit couldn't help trembling in fear. Tzendrinble won't be able to evade the attacks at this speed, but Ady still smiled boldly inside her cockpit.

"Hmmp — ! Looking away in a fight with Eru is too careless!"

It wasn't likely that these words acted as the cue, but at this moment — Flaming lances aimed at the Vouivre flew in from the side. It goes without saying those came from Ikaruga's Sword Cannon.

"I know you'll come, Demon God! It's useless, watch while I crush your subordinates into dust!"

The Anculosas reacted immediately. [Zafar Namah] shot out from the ship's hull to intercept the magic projectiles. There was more than one person controlling this Flying Dragon Battleship. Aside from the main pilot Doroteo inside the Dragon Head, each Anculosa had their own knight runners, on top of the personnels controlling the Etheric Levitator. There wouldn't be any blindspots from such an obvious attack.

"Your spells are useless against the Flying Dragon... What!? What's going on!?"

Doroteo's smile of ease ceased because it wasn't just a single Flaming lance. One after another, a shocking number of magic projectiles assaulted them relentlessly. The ease on Doroteo's face disappeared without a trace.

Ikaruga landed some distance away from the Flying Dragon Battleship that was pursuing the Tzendrinble. With both feet firmly on the ground, it deployed the four Sword Cannons on its back and the two in its arms and fired Flaming lance repeatedly.

"Why? How can it unleash so many magic projectiles!? How is it doing it? Was he holding back just now!?"

He made a mistake by underestimating Ikaruga's spells, and thinking that [Zafar Namah] can block them. Ikaruga draws its power from two large Ether Reactors. Even though the reactors made from two humungous beasts of comparable sizes could generate massive amounts of mana, it was still strained by the heavy load of both the Sword Cannons and the Magius Jet Thrusters.

— If that was the case, not using them at the same time would do. Ikaruga stopped the Magius Jet Thrusters, and unleashed overwhelming firepower that exceeds that of a wizard style machine by channeling all its mana into the Sword Cannons.

Just one Flaming lance had several times the power of a normal magic projectile. The storm like attack exceeds the limit of the [Zafar Namah] quickly. The ferocious lance of fire penetrate the whirlpool of lighting and reached the Flying Dragon Battleship. It hit the hull of the Battleship directly and exploded fiercely. The impact shook the ship, making the Flying Dragon Battleship deviate from its course. The next hit destroyed an Anculosa on the hull.

"Ugh! Disengage for now, return fire on that Demon God! Do not let that thing move freely...!"

Doroteo had to abandon his attack on the ground. His crew increased the Ether concentration within the Etheric Levitator, and intense flames burst out from the Magius Jet Thrusters right after that, allowing the Flying Dragon Battleship to climb at high speed. It opened fire at Ikaruga in retaliation, and

Ikaruga takes to the sky again to engage in aerial combat once more.

"Damn it... It's an annoyance, but I don't have time for that horse. Increase the concentration of the Etheric Levitator, don't let that Demon God land again!"

Doroteo could feel the inertia from the climb as he gritted his teeth in regret. Not only did he allow Ikaruga to move freely, he also lowered the altitude to target the galloping Tzendrinble, resulting in this fatal mistake. Because he stayed within range of ground attacks, Ikaruga's attack managed to land, dealing heavy damage to the ship.

"We can't lose any more Anculosa, I will end him here."

If it was aerial combat, Eru could still fight the enemy on equal footing. When he saw the Anculosas unleashing [Zafar Namah] to intercept the magic projectiles, Eru planned his next attack.

"Fufufu~ now's the chance. Give them another taste of Mi-chan!"

"Reload is complete. You picked such a cute name, but uses it in such a cruel way."

At this moment Tzendrinble completed the reload of the Vertical launched javelin thrower. As the Flying Dragon had switched its target, they got to go about their task quickly and safely. Ady could spare the effort to watch the movements of Ikaruga and the Flying Dragon criss crossing in the air, and launch an attack.

"...! Now!"

When Ikaruga and the Flying Dragon passed each other by, Ady used the chance to fire the Vertical launched javelin thrower. Ten Missile Javelins flew towards the Flying Dragon with trails of flame.

"Javelins incoming from below!"

"The Anculosas at the bottom are to intercept calmly. We will deal with the Demon God... No, that guy is aiming for this chance!"

When it saw the Missile Javelin take off, the Demon God immediately changed its movements. It was keeping its distance and firing occasionally, but it had switched to charging at full speed. As the Missile Javelin draws near from the ground, the Demon God closes in with a charge.

The pincer attack from the Missile Javelin and Flaming lance pushed the [Zafar Namah] to its limit momentarily. Ikaruga didn't let that chance go, and closed in

on the Vouivre rapidly.

"The [Zafar Namah]... won't make it in time!"

"Forget about that. Shoot out magic projectiles! Stop them!"

The Anculosas immediately gave up on intercepting with [Zafar Namah], and switched to suppressing fire with spell attacks. But Ikaruga dodged with minute jets and continued its approach. The Flying Dragon Battleship's gigantic body possess overwhelming offensive and defensive capabilities, but Ikaruga had the upper hand in terms of mobility. Even the Flying Dragon had no guarantee of withstanding Ikaruga's firepower.

The density of the magic projectile barrage kept increasing, the sound of their screeching through the air increased in decibels. As the demon faced alien Silhouette Knight closed in, the knight runners inside the Anculosas could feel the pressure directed their way growing stronger.

"What a warm welcome! But, I'm finally here!!"

Ikaruga uses the power of its Sword Cannon to carve open a path through the torrent of magic projectiles shot out desperately by the Flying Dragon. The [Rahu Fist] that finally got into range broke through the air with a sharp screech, and stabbed into the Vouivre. Ikaruga retracted the cable at high speed

as it accelerates even more. At such close range, the Flying Dragon lost all means of resistance — the moment he realized that, Doroteo made an unbelievable move.

"All hands secure yourselves! We will be doing a [barrel roll]!!"

After saying that, Doroteo pulled his control stick and kicked at his pedal, issuing a ridiculous command to the entire vessel. Ikaruga that was retracting its cable and preparing to board felt an unexpected acceleration which surprised it. Eru was shocked when he saw what the Levitate Ship was doing

The entire hull of the ship right before his eyes was moving to the side. The crystal tissues in its entire body creaked as the Flying Dragon was spiralling and flipping around. This weren't movements normal Levitate Ships could pull off.

"Ah, uwah, oh no. If the Rahu Fist continues to hang on..."

As the Rahu Fist was connected to the ship, Ikaruga was dragged into the spiralling too. Even though he was spinning around and on the verge of being flinged away, Eru still endured with gritted teeth.

"This is a terrifying idea... However!"

For him, tumbling around in the air was a norm, something he was good at. He unclenched the Rahu Fists grabbing onto the ship, then regained his balance by firing short bursts from his Magius Jet Thrusters. After orientating itself in the sky, Ikaruga renewed its attack.

"So you unhanded us, Demon God? Then taste this!"

The enormous claw attacked without warning, and came right before Ikaruga. The spinning wasn't just an evasive move, it also moved the Draconic claw to an angle that was normally impossible, and used it to attack Ikaruga directly.

The battle between the flying Silhouette Knight and the Levitate Ship — in this duel that had no precedence, Doroteo used a never seen before attack. The two machines which were the crystallization of the cutting edge technology redefines the common sense of the past with their every attack.

"A countermeasure! Good show!"

Ikaruga's Magius Jet Thruster unleashed an explosive burst of air a second earlier, and the machine was blown away, narrowly avoiding the steel claws of the Flying Dragon. After righting itself, the Flying Dragon gave chase without stopping. The spells fired by Anculosa chased Ikaruga tightly.

Ikaruga used its Sword Cannon to deflect the magic projectiles coming

straight at it, then revved its thruster to accelerate. Eru could feel enormous pressure with each acceleration and deceleration. Although the powerful physical boost of the Silhouette Knight could protect the pilot to some extent, but the inertia from the explosive acceleration exceeded this barrier. Eru's appearance might seem frail, but what drives him was his spirit of a madman willing to live and die for the sake of robots. He endured the acceleration with gritted teeth. Even in such a dire situation, he still had a chilling smile on his face.

"Flying Dragon... is really a powerful weapon! The piloting is exceptional too, it's hard to find any weak points."

Showered by an unending stream of attacks, Ikaruga decided to dodge for the moment. It would return fire occasionally on a whim, but those were all blocked by the lightning.

"Worth mentioning is that new type of defensive Silhouette Arms. It can block ranged shots and be used as close ranged attacks. Ikaruga is a Warrior style machine, so I will be at an disadvantage against it."

Even if he could get pass those defensive Silhouette Arms, there was still the melee battle with the main body lying in wait. A Levitate Ship capable of melee battle was just like foul play.

He managed to wound the Flying Dragon via a surprise attack, the opponent wouldn't be so careless to fall for the same thing again. Slaying that dragon felt

like an impossible mission.

"However... You should know that magic isn't omnipotent. And that will become your weakness!"

He could only dodge in the face of the powerful airborne Battleship, but Eru still didn't give up on winning. He waited patiently for a chance as he focused on evading the attacks.

The Silver Phoenix Knights 2nd company responsible for covering the New Kuscheperca Kingdom army's retreat continued to fall back.

"Let the heavily damaged knights retreat first! Damn it, those black knights are charging again!"

"Knock into them! Push them back! This level of armour is nothing compared to demon beasts!"

The 2nd company roared as it countered the black knight's attack. Although they have a bunch of offensive weapons, they were lacking in defensive gears such as shields. If they want to halt the black knights' advance, they need to strike back. Furthermore, they couldn't move freely, and for this group that excels more in offense than defence, their retreating allies were slowing them down.

"The enemy aren't slowing down at all. I thought as much, they won't back down with their prey so close before them. But our allies are far enough back, it is about time for us to take some measures."

Right after pushing the enemy back, the 2nd company quickly checked the situation. The half destroyed new kingdom army might be moving slowly, but they were steadily retreating. The unyielding spirit of the 2nd company had finally bore fruit.

"Hey, captain Di! No good, his battle isn't going well."

On the field, their company captain Dietrich and his machine Guyalarinde had his hands full just fending off the Swordsman pestering him, and couldn't spare the attention to look around him. The two machines were isolated on the battlefield.

"I want to help, but that opponent is too strong! If this goes on, only the captain will be left behind..."

Dietrich and his opponent were too strong, making it hard for others to butt in. With the new kingdom army completing their withdrawal, those two might get left behind.

"Hey hey, what's with those guys, how stubbornly tough! They're actually still standing."

Gustavo couldn't help grumbling frustratedly after looking around him.

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The Guyalarinde was very prominent among the rear guards, and possess exceptional combat abilities. If Gustavo could bring it down, the black knights could bring down the rest of the small fries — that was his original plan, but the results? The black knights did have the upper hand in the beginning, but they had been stopped by the valiant efforts of the rear guards.

"Tch, it will be a disgrace to let the enemy escape! We can't waste anymore time. Dual swords, I'm going to take this seriously now!"

That just happens to be what Dietrich was thinking not long ago. Gustavo intensified his offences. The quality behind the Swordsman's attack changed. The weight behind the strike was the same, but the movement of the blade became more complicated. It wasn't clear how the scene looks like from Gustavo's eyes, but the sword snaked towards gaps that weren't really gaps, and Dietrich couldn't keep up.

Sparks kept flying from Guyalarinde's armour, and its damage continued to pile up. It was only still standing thanks to the additional combat armour it had equipped. A normal machine would have fell long ago.

"So that guy has been playing around all this while? Ugh, he's actually suppressing me in terms of swordplay!?"

The fast paced battle drained his mana pool rapidly. It was only a matter of time before he was immobilized because of mana exhaustion or critical damage.

"Hmm — you aren't bad as a swordsman. I had fun, but this is the end. Go down!"

The Swordsman's merciless attacks continued. Despite being pushed to the brink, strangely, Dietrich didn't feel any frustration.

"I'm losing... defeated? No, not yet. Me and Guyalarinde are still standing in this battlefield!"

That [loss] he experience flashed in his mind. Back then, he wasn't defeated in battle, but actually [fled].

"Guyalarinde said it too, we have nowhere to retreat, and can only advance...!"

The noise around him gradually faded away, and he became increasingly unfazed by the sparks flying from the clash of blades. The sound was like a flowing river to Dietrich, he had never felt such emotions since he became the captain of the 2nd company.

He wasn't afraid of the possibility of defeat before him, and a surge of red hot [violence] welled up from within him. Without realizing it, a smile appeared on his face. The crimson knight [Guyalarinde] was his avatar, but that didn't mean he was only good in offences. His nature was in executing the [will] hidden within the weapons of his enemies.

Guyalarinde's movement changed a little. The crimson machine endured the one sided attacks as it stepped forward. It wasn't clear if this was a suicidal or rash move, but the Swordsman welcomed all this gleefully. Guyalarinde was covered in wounds, and could fall at any moment.

In the face of the incoming blade, Guyalarinde didn't parry it with his sword but blocked it with its forearm. The armour screeched and bent under the attack, but that was it. The thick combat plate could stop a single attack, but that couldn't do so repeatedly. But this was enough to create a gap in the enemy's defences. With an explosive sound, a lump of steel [lightning flail] flew out from under Guyalarinde's twisted arm mail — This hidden weapon revealed itself at the most opportune timing towards its adversary.

With the explosive burst of speed, the lightning flail flew right at the defensive body of the opponent. The loud collision sound between two hard surfaces that magic projectiles couldn't reproduce echoed out. Splintered armour flew out from the Swordsman — that seemed to be the case on the surface, but that wasn't so. The splintered parts were the sword and sheath

strapped to the Swordsman's body. His obsession with swords which led to the retarded action of strapping swords all over the machine served as an unexpected armour for the Swordsman. Even without drawing the swords out, they were still Gustavo's weapons. Gustavo then showed his amazing reflexes, regaining his balance from the impact immediately, then counter attacked Guyalarinde in one smooth motion.

"Fu, haha, hahahaha! That was close! It's a pity, but my sword wins out in the end!"

Guyalarinde arm remained outreached, and was one lethal step slower. The Swordsman's counter attack cut deeply into Guyalarinde's flank. It was very deep, and the crisp sound of crystal shattering came from the depths of the machine.

Gustavo was sure that he had won. After the abdomen had been ripped open, it would be impossible to fight on. The Crimson knight was done for.

— That should be the case. And so, his attention lapsed for a brief moment, but Dietrich's attack wasn't over. Guyalarinde ignored the blade in its body and continued advancing, and Gustavo's confident smile scrowled. When he understood Dietrich's intention, he attempted to pull the Swordsman back in the back, but didn't do so in time before Guyalarinde closed in..

"What the hell! You still want to struggle? How annoying! "

"Of course I would! I have decided that I won't run away so easily again! I won't be beaten down, and will fight to the very end!"

Guyalarinde held its opponent in a bear hug, then leaned back before unleashing a head butt. The holo monitor's image distorted seriously, probably caused by the impact to the crystal eye ball.

"Damn it! Is this guy retarded!?"

His reckless actions pulled Gustavo into confusion, Dietrich's [retardedness] exceeds his expectations. The Swordsman and Guyalarinde were both machines specialized with offense and loaded with weapons, but Guyalarinde had an ace its adversary didn't have, the [Magius Jet Thrusters] built into its body. With the Swordsman still in its arms, Guyalarinde shot out glaring red flames from its shoulders and waist. The intense explosive flame tossed the two machine into the air with a howl. After hanging in the air for a brief moment, they fell heavily onto the ground.

"Woooahhh, ahhhh!?"

The two machines were stuck together as they kept rolling. The cockpit was shaken violently and the pilots couldn't spare the effort to adjust their posture. Gustavo used everything he had to control the machine, release the sword in his hand, and send Guyalarinde flying with a kick. Guyalarinde was at its limits

and couldn't resist, and was forcefully pushed away.

"T-This is too reckless! What is this guy doing..."

Even though he was confused by the unexpected attack, Gustavo still tried to stand the machine up. The Swordsman suffered some damage from the impact and roll, but it wasn't lethal. He turned his head to check on the enemy and saw a terrifying sight — the jets of flame appeared again, and the Guyalarinde he sent flying had stood up while spinning around like a top. The tissues on its stomach had been destroyed, and still managed to stand even though it couldn't even move properly.

"W-What the hell!? What's wrong with you!?"

At this moment, Gustavo felt pure fear. He feared these actions that went beyond his common sense, and feared his opponent's unusual persistence. Guyalarinde stumbled to the Swordsman that was still on the ground. It couldn't move normally, and could only attack as it was falling. There wasn't any technique in this blow which was thrown out without any thought. Despite his state of confusion, Gustavo still responded to it. At this moment, he finally realized a fatal fact — the Swordsman wasn't holding any sword. That sword was still stuck in Guyalarinde's belly.

The Swordsman who has lost its blade was at a lost and stopped its movement. Guyalarinde continued its merciless attack, and cut off both of the Swordsman's arms in one swing. After losing its means of offence, the

Swordsman's combat capability was as good as gone.

"How can my sword lose...!?"

Guyalarinde maintained its downswing stance, and activated its back weapon [Kamtha]. At extremely close range and nowhere to run, the air blades created a cyclone. The Swordsman flew like a rag doll from the direct hit, and shards of crystals and armour fell from the machine. When it finally stopped rolling, it couldn't stand up and retaliate any longer.

"Impossible. The captain's machine — Swordsman is...!?"

Gustavo Mardones and his machine [Swordsman] was the strongest combination renowned in the entire Žaloudek Army. But someone managed to fight the Swordsman on equal footing and even defeated it. This scene was a strong blow to the Žaloudek Army. And their wavering was the perfect chance for the 2nd company to strike back.

"Captain Di took care of it for us!"

"Alright, now's our chance! Kick their ass! Spank them so hard that they can't get up again!!"

The morale of the Kardatolle army was raised in one shot, and they unleashed a fierce charge against the black knights. The short moment of wavering made the black knights react one step late in taking the onslaught of the 2nd company. The defeat of their captain Gustavo resulted in their command system falling into chaos.

"Alright! The enemy is in disarray, let's scram!"

"Hey, what do we do about that? Captain Di is about to fall."

That's right. He fended off the Swordsman, but Guyalarinde also suffered critical damage. The wound to its stomach was especially serious. It couldn't even stand up, and remained still on its knees, supporting itself with both of its swords.

"... I will leave the title of the strongest swordsman to you. But I will take this victory."

Dietrich breathed out deeply in his pilot's seat. Guyalarinde's mana pool has been depleted, and it couldn't even move its fingertips. When he realized that he had to retreat, his face turned stiff.

"Ah — I went too far this time?"

A Silhouette Knight depleted of mana was no different from a decoration, and he would probably be surrounded by the enemy in no time.

"There's no other way... I have to leave Guyalarinde behind."

There was no time to grieve, heavy footsteps were approaching from behind the machine. Dietrich couldn't even turn Guyalarinde's head and turned anxious. He couldn't stand the thought of abandoning his machine, but not to the extent of going down with it. If he wanted to run, now was the chance.

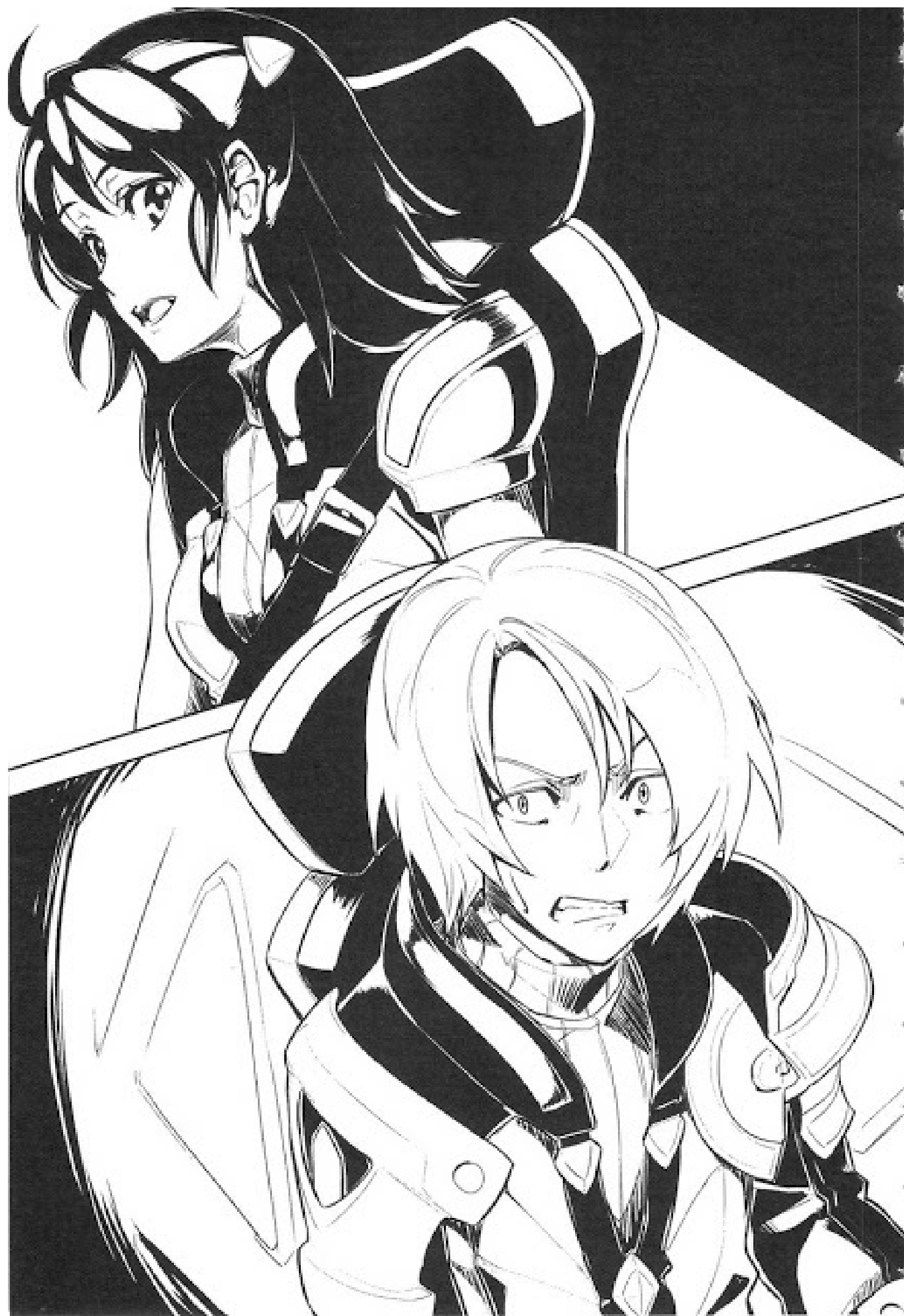
"Di-Sempai! You're too reckless!?"

When he heard the voice from behind him, his anxiety vanished. It was Ady in her Tzendrinble.

"... Huh, to think the very incarnation of 'reckless' is saying that to me. But Ady, why did you come back? How's thing going at the Knight Commander's side?"

"Well~ Ikaruga and that Flying Dragon flew off at top speed, so I had to turn back."

Ikaruga and the Flying Dragon turned their thrusters on at full blast, and their high speed battle was still ongoing. If Tzendrinble followed them, it would be completely isolated. Hence, Ady had no choice but to turn back grudgingly.



"Well, Ernesti will find a way no matter what happens. It will be great if you can give me a hand."

"Understood~ Tzen-chan will run with Guyalarinde in tow for a while."

"Looks like I owe you one."

Tzendrinble shot out towing anchors from behind, hooking them onto Guyalarinde.

"Don't mention it! If we leave Guyalarinde here, Eru will be sad."

"Yeah right, but it's fine to worry about me a little right!? You're a really mean junior."

When Tzendrinble started galloping, even Dietrich who was in the cockpit of Guyalarinde could feel the friction and shaking. It was so bumpy that Dietrich shouted in panic:

"Whooooaaa, hey! You're too rough!? I-It will break!"

"It's already in shambles, so it's fine to break it a little more!"

"How is that fine!? Please don't break the ropes and leave me behind mid way!"

As the two of them squabbled, Tzendrinble continued running with Guyalarinde in tow. The 2nd company followed right behind him as they began their retreat.

Going back to the time before the 2nd company was starting to retreat.

Just like how the battle on the ground had been decided, the aerial duel between Ikaruga and Vouivre was reaching a crucible.

The Flying Dragon Battleship continued intense spell and melee attacks on the Demon God, but the Demon God had only been hit by a few magic projectile shots, and could still take deft evasive actions, which made Doroteo even more frustrated.

At this moment, his crew in charge of the reactor had a distressing report:

"Captain, the mana consumption is faster than expected, our mana pool is at 30%... The Ether Reactor's supply couldn't keep up with the expenditure."

"Ugh, we used it that much. That Demon God has been moving nonstop all this time, just what kind of reactor did it has to supply such a monstrous amount of mana... No, this is because we lost one Anculosa."

Doroteo's face was just as sour as his crew. During the battle, one Anculosa was seriously damaged from the powerful magic projectile attack from the Sword Cannon. From its air intake valves to silver nerves, nothing on it was intact and it couldn't supply any mana. Such critical damage couldn't be repaired during live combat.

"We didn't underestimate the enemy and are prepared for losses. But losing [one live] when fighting that Demon God is too heavy a burden."

The Vouivre that was more than ten times the size of a Silhouette Knight was a huge manmade construct, and its physical boost mana consumption was equally heavy. Normal Ether Reactors could supply only enough mana for one Silhouette Knight's operation, so one or two of those wouldn't be sufficient to fuel the Battleship. In order to keep up with the mana consumption, it would require a heart as powerful as the legendary behemoth. However, demon beasts have gone extinct in the Occident, so that would be impossible. For Horacio, the designer of the Flying Dragon, this was a critical problem he faced

in the past.

After that, he encounters the technology that could solve this problem in the battlefield known as the Kuscheperca Kingdom. It was the [Wizard style] Silhouette Knights. These Silhouette Knights that pushed their magic projectile offences to the limit and were equipped with wall robes that were made from mana plates.

And so, [by letting several machines share a common Wall Robe, there would be a bigger mana pool to tap on] — the creator of the Levitate Ship, Horacio concept uses the ship as the base, and developed into this ultimate form The [Anculosa] installed all over the Flying Dragon Battleship, plus the [Dragon Head], there were a total of thirteen machines. This was the system used by the Flying Dragon Battleship, which has a [super large mana storage device]. The Anculosa were an important offensive and defensive tool, and also serve as the hearts that maintain this ship — That was the secret behind the life of this mechanical dragon.

And now, they had lost one during the battle with the Demon God, and had twelve left. It might seem sufficient, but the gap was really big. Considering the basic upkeep needed for physical boost and the continuous use of Magius Jet Thrusters, the intense battle on top of that as the Flying Dragon fought at full strength meant it had been consuming mana like a glutton.

"... Am I pushing too hard?"

Doroteo pulled the control stick in his hand hard. With the sworn enemy before him, he seemed to be getting too worked up. In this era, the Flying Dragon Battleship's prowess was good enough to be considered the best in history, and no one knew what's its ceiling was.

No matter which enemy base it attacked, or how many Silhouette Knights it fought, they were far from capable in pushing the Flying Dragon to its limits. In order to bring out its full potential, they needed to fight the one known as Ikaruga, the most ferocious opponent known in history. Hence, the Flying Dragon was slowly pushed to its brink as the battle rages on.

"... No choice, it would be a greater loss if the dragon couldn't move. Increase the altitude, we need to recover our mana."

The Flying Dragon slowed down, deployed its wing sails and went into cruising mode. In order to slow mana consumption, they would need to stop the Magius Jet Thrusters. Once the Flying Dragon loses its speed, it wouldn't be able to fight the Demon God on equal footing. Inside the center of the ship, the crew injected ether into the Etheric Levitator hastily. As the amount of ether increases inside the device, the rainbow light within it intensified. At the same time, the Flying Dragon increased its output, and the vessel started climbing quickly under the effects of the levitate field.

The change in the Flying Dragon's action didn't escape Eru's eyes.

"... Look like its time. That's right, when its mana pool is depleted, the opponent's weakness will show. The heart of the behemoth is needed to maintain the operation and movement of Ikaruga. What did you sacrifice in

order to move that dragon?"

Ikaruga turned in the air, and shifts the Magius Jet Thruster to advance in a different direction. He wasn't going towards the Vouivre that was still climbing.

In terms of mana consumption, Ikaruga was also a fearsome glutton. However, Ikaruga was still a Silhouette Knights. Not only was its basic upkeep low, the mana it used to move was much lesser than that of the Flying Dragon. Other than it, it was equipped with hearts more powerful than the combined 13 lives on the Flying Dragon Battleship. This overwhelming mana supply create this chance for him to turn the tables.

This was why the pilot Ernesti decided to fight a drawn out battle, which was reminiscent of his battle with the behemoth. For the sake of victory, he could fight a long and tough battle that would have pushed anyone else insane. He was fine with being shaken about by the sudden accelerations inside the ferocious humanoid weapon Ikaruga. If it involves Silhouette Knights **【robots】**, he could find joy in anything. All his grand achievements stem from his hopelessly perverted personality.

"Oh right now, I won't let this chance slip away. I will devour you right here!!"

"Damn it, the Demon God is chasing us as expected!"

The report from the crew surveilling the bottom made Doroteo groan. The Flying Dragon was in front right now, but considering the difference in speed, it was just a matter of time before they were caught. However, the Flying Dragon Battleship didn't seem to be taking any countermeasures and continued focusing on gaining altitude.

The thing supporting Doroteo was the words Horacio said to him before the campaign — [if the Flying Dragon is not powerful enough, please soar high and far away. Without limits or restraints. The sky will protect the ruler, give him strength to defeat the enemy.] He didn't expound further on this, only leaving this cryptic advice. But there was no other choice but to trust him.

"... If this situation will harm the Demon God, then it will be advantageous to us. Even if I have to work with the devil himself, I will make full use of him."

They injected all the Ether they could muster into the Etheric Levitator, climbing higher further, right to the limits. The Flying Dragon continued rising even after reaching the clouds, finally breaking through it and onto the blue skies.

"This... Is the world beyond the clouds... Beautiful."

The moment they broke through the grey clouds, a white, bright borderless world appeared before them. In terms of the structure of the Etheric Levitator, climbing to this height consumes too much Ether, so this was the first time they went above the clouds. In this brief respite from battle, Doroteo was attracted

by the scenery before him, but this moment was fleeting. The Vouivre's shadow fell onto the clouds as it continued rising.

Ikaruga also continue its ascend in pursuit of the Flying Dragon Battleship that had dived through the clouds.

"It was tough climbing here with just the Magius Jet Thrusters, but the goal shouldn't be far."

This game of tag couldn't go on forever. During Eru's investigation of the Levitate Ship, he obtained knowledge related to the Etheric Levitator. This flight device might be very practical, but it has a big flaw — The upper limits of the lifting force was dependent on how much Ether the reactor could retain. It was impossible to climb indefinitely with the Etheric Levitator, and the limit would be reached at some point.

"Judging from the performance of previous Levitate Ships and the size of that Flying Dragon, it should be reaching its maximum altitude after passing through the clouds. It's about time to end this..."

Suddenly, he felt strange. His breathing was ragged, vision narrowed and he felt a sense of pressure in his chest. He press his hand against his chest, and frowned when he realized that something was really wrong with his body.

"This is... Fu, I can breath. I know about the issue of [atmospheric pressure], and already made preparation scripts for Ikaruga to pressurize the cabin. What

am I missing..."

After that, Eru did a thorough check before his condition worsens further. Ikaruga was under his full control, so Eru could check his body this way and understand how Ikaruga was doing more deeply. He investigated the changes from the reaction of minute spells. A short while later, he discovered a major [change].

"...The mana supply is increasing?"

The two massive reactors [Behemoth's Heart] and [Queen's coronet] could produce mana that far exceeds normal reactors, so he missed out the fact that the supply was higher than usual. [The mana supply is increasing] might seem like a good thing on the surface, but it has a huge underlying problem beneath it.

"The quantity of air intake is the same. Considering the drop in atmospheric pressure, it should be decreasing instead. Fu, in that case...! Only the ether intake has increased!?"

It was the same theory as using Ether Supplier. If the amount of ether intake increase, the Ether Reactor's output would go up too. However, ever since he started piloting Ikaruga, he had never felt any obvious changes like such an increase in the mana supply before.

He could feel the increase burden in his heart and abnormal breathing. The condition of his body and the characteristics of the Ether Reactor. Finally, he remembered the side effect of Ether Supplier, and a flash of inspiration came to his mind—

"The higher the altitude, the thinner the air. Hmm, but the ether concentration increases instead... So that's it... Oh no!!"

The important element ether could be said to be the source of all phenomenon in this world. However, living beings and Ether Reactors that had gotten used to the thin ether concentration couldn't survive for long in an ether rich environment. This was the fatal flaw of the Ether Supplier. And now, this phenomenon is happening to Ikaruga and Eru.

During this time, Ikaruga was still ascending and has finally broken through the clouds. In this clear blue sky, the Vouivre was even higher up. Eru glided on the vast sea of cloud as he stared at that figure. He then made Ikaruga raised its Sword Cannon to take aim. Unfortunately, he was still too far away. Eru gave up on firing, then turned around as if he was leaving the sight of the scene before him, and descended with Ikaruga.

As he was descending, Eru continued to think. Knowledge from another world, earth, told him that beyond the sky lies a vacuum — [outer space]. By combining this knowledge with the laws of this world, he made a conclusion.

"... Fu, in this world, in its sky... Beyond the sky...! It's probably... a space filled with pure ether."

The drop in atmospheric pressure and the increase in ether, with this formula, the answer is obvious — In this world, [vacuum] was a space filled with ether.

"The influence of ether affects everything equally. The Flying Dragon obviously knew about this when it led me up this high. I see, so they have found a way to go around this."

Ikaruga lowered his altitude and went below the clouds soon. Eru felt relieved as his breathing steadied, and smiled brilliantly.

"... Right now, Ikaruga couldn't reach that height. I will concede this match, it's your win. But I have grasped the concept now, so there won't be a next time."

Ikaruga turned with the fine-tuned control of the magius jet thrusters, and left to link up with the retreating new kingdom army.

"Sigh~~ I lost, damn it."

Gustavo was seated inside Swordsman with its chest armour opened as he

grumbled towards the sky. Both of the Swordsman's arms were destroyed, it was damaged all over the body and most of the swords he was so proud of were broken. If Guyalarinde wasn't seriously damaged too, he would probably be finished off alongside with the Swordsman. He was lucky that he got to sit like this and stare stupefied at the sky.

"It's quiet, are things at dad's side over too?"

The sky he was looking at didn't have any signs combat between the Demon God and the Flying Dragon. He didn't think the Flying Dragon will lose, but he still felt a hint of unease when he thought about its adversaries amazing combat powers.

Heavy footsteps came from behind him. He turned back and saw that the black knights were here to pick him up.

Gustavo waved weakly to show that he wasn't hurt.

"What's next then? Well, I'm lucky to make it out of this alive."

The Swordsman was Gustavo's beloved machine, and was equivalent to his avatar. Since it was heavily damaged, he wouldn't be able to utilize his skills. And not just him, the black knights also suffered serious damages, and had to abandon the pursuit of the new kingdom army.

And so, the series of battles around the fortress city ended with the overwhelming victory for the Žaloudek Army.

Before the New Kuscheperca Kingdom army was wiped out, they managed to pull out. The Silver Phoenix Knights was also dealt the heavy blow with the lost of a company captain machine. Although the Žaloudek Army suffered heavy losses, that was dismissed by the masses because of the victory.

On the other hand, the undefeated Demon God had no choice but to yield to the vastness of this world; the strongest Flying Dragon realized its weakness through the battle with the Demon God. The meeting of the two strongest entities ended in a draw.

The result of this battle had a major significance. The ace of the New Kuscheperca Kingdom, the Silver Phoenix Knights that were viewed as their spiritual support, and the fact of their defeat dealt a heavy blow to the nation, casting a shadow on their future battles.

C.E. 1282.

With the air of chaos still lingering in the air, autumn came.

Arc 10: Capital Reconquest

Chapter 42: Battle Preparations



Arc
10

• Capital Reconquest Arc

Knight's
& Magic

Some time has passed since the clash between the Silver Phoenix Knights and the Jade Dragon Knights, where both sides retired from the battle with heavy damage.

Since then, the Western Grand Storm slipped into a period of relative calm, partially because the strongest force on each side was taking the time to recuperate.

During this lull, skirmishes continued to happen from time to time. Despite their valiant push to reclaim their lost territory, New Kuscheperca's attacks have all met in failure at the hands of the defense-oriented black knights. Overall, no lasting gains were made, and the battle soon devolved into a stalemate. Yet, in everyone's hearts, they knew that both sides were only biding their time to regroup, and the flames of war would soon reignite the land once more.



At a base near Delvincourt, which the Jade Dragon Knights designated their headquarters to exploit the nearby lumber, Doroteo, Commander of the Jade Dragon Knights and the Captain of the Flying Dragon Battleship 'Vouivre', gazed out at the massive ship docked outside.

"...So, how is the repair coming along?" Doroteo asked the man standing behind him.

"The repair to the ship itself should not give us much trouble, and will be done once the replacement parts get installed. On the other hand, the Anculosas will take a bit longer to repair and replenish. Ah, more important than the repairs, if we do not think of some proper modifications to the battleship, we will end up facing mana insufficiency again the next time we encounter the 'Demon God'." The man, Horacio, callously grumbled as he flipped through the reports.

Outside, the Flying Dragon Battleship lay prone – recuperating from the previous battle, beyond which were the boundless blue skies. In this world, there was yet to be a large enough dockyard to accommodate the battleship, unlike its younger brethren, the Levitate Ships. As such, repairs for the battleship would need to be carried out in the open, in spite of its highly secretive status, and only the surrounding woods provide some cover from the prying eyes of the public.

Nearby, the footsteps of Silhouette Knights rumbled. A sizable contingent of Resvants, requisitioned from the nearby lands, toiled on the repair with parts in

tow. Understandably, the sheer effort that was needed to construct and repair the airships made it impossible without the assistance of heavy machinery.

“Haa... Seriously. With 13 Ether Reactors attached, the Dragon already has a mindboggling high mana output, how the heck did it run into an issue with mana insufficiency? If anything, this is turning into a logistical nightmare.”

“I don’t want to hear your complaints. No matter how difficult, I want you to see the problem resolved.”

“Fine, I have an inkling as to how we can tackle the problem. Although that ‘device’ is still just a prototype, it seems we have no other options than to see it used...” Horacio said as he shrugged his shoulders.

“Oh? You have a solution already? Is that the one...?” Doroteo followed Horacio’s eyes to a large container outside.

The size of the container was about half the size of a Silhouette Knight, and seemed to have some weight to it, as it required a cart-pushing Silhouette Knight to transport.

“Yes, that is an Ether Reactor.”

“W-what? That is really a surprise, The Ether Reactors I know are no larger than a man.”

Horacio matter-of-factly declared the transported content, an object that seemed to barely fit into the oversized wooden container. As a Knight Runner who was familiar with the inner workings of the Silhouette Knights, Doroteo could not help but be surprised at the object that was so vastly different from the Ether Reactors he was familiar with.

“It is an experimental high-throughput Ether Reactor... I personally call it the ‘Dragon Blood Reactor’.”

Although seemingly listless on the outside, Horacio had a deep and intense glare to his eyes. With his arms swung open, he began his explanation.

“As my lord knows, continuous exposure of a normal Ether Reactor to concentrated Ether results in the degradation of the reactor, ultimately resulting in the ‘death’ of the reactor. This is the main drawback to our Ether

Suppliers. However, the mass produced Ether Reactors were originally designed for the atmospheric Ether, and as such, was a poor match for our 'Applied Etherlite Theory' which used concentrated Ether. If we instead constructed an Ether Reactor from the ground up with concentrated Ether in mind, which could handle the high-throughput energy, we should be able to avoid reactor degradation."

"Wh-...?! Lord Collazo, if you had such an incredible device on hand, why didn't you have it installed on construction?"

"Well... Let's just say that not everything went according to plan." Compared to the clearly displeased Doroteo, Horacio just let out a long sigh, and simply shrugged his shoulder as he replied, "In short, since it was designed as a high-throughput reactor, it would not be able to properly function with insufficient Ether. Let's see, at the minimum, it would require a continual injection of concentrated Ether for it to start up and function at its baseline capacity."

Doroteo was speechless at Horacio's declaration, which made clear to Doroteo a major flaw in the prototype reactor.

"The stockpile of Ethelite is critical to the maneuver and operation of the ship, and the Flying Dragon Battleship wasn't designed to be very abundant in storage space. If the supply of Ethelite were to run out, then no matter how efficient the reactor is..." Doroteo remarked.

"Impressive. Yes, just as you have posited, this is why the reactor is still a mere prototype. However, as far as the overwhelming power output is concerned, I can vouch for it with my reputation on the line."

"Ugh..."

The Flying Dragon Battleship was a marvel of engineering unmatched in the skies. However, because it was rushed into service, there were numerous flaws and rough edges to its design. If they were to add in the Dragon Blood Reactor haphazardly, it was certain to adversely impact the handling of the craft. Even Doroteo was barely able to command such a behemoth in its original form, and had to tap into his years of accumulated experience and intuition. Therefore, Doroteo could clearly imagine the sheer leap in difficulty with new parts incorporated.

“Fine. If we even cannot accept this small a risk, we will have no chance against the ‘Demon God’.” However, despite the difficulties, Doroteo agreed without a hint of hesitation.

Doroteo’s sworn enemy, the ‘Demon God’, was a single Silhouette Knight of astonishing capabilities. It was one which even the Flying Dragon Battleship in its prime could not defeat. Therefore, Doroteo recognized that they need to exceed the confines of logic to have the slightest chance at defeating it.

“I understand. I will take the responsibility and allow the Flying Dragon to soar at a greater height than ever before.”

With that said, Horacio took a bow and slowly walked out the room. However, seemingly recalling something on his mind, Horacio suddenly turned to Doroteo after just a few steps.

“My lord, what do you think is the power behind the ‘Demon God’? For a single Silhouette Knight to fight on equal grounds with the thirteen lives of the dragon, it certainly makes you wonder what is required to make such a ferocious unit...” Horacio let out a sigh, and then, with his arms outstretched, he gazed upward, “If I could just get the answer to that mystery, any cost is acceptable.”

“Being too fixated on the unknown is without merits. Our immediate goal should be to improve the Dragon with all the means available to us, and defeat that bastard as soon as possible. With this new reactor, I am certain victory will finally be within reach...!”

With his declaration, the large reactor was to be installed into the belly of the Flying Dragon Battleship. Doroteo watched as a large group of engineers and Silhouette Knight busied themselves with work, and gritted his teeth in anticipation.



While the Kingdom of Žaloudek was busy with the repairs of the Flying Dragon Battleship, the Kingdom of New Kuscheperca was also bustling with excitement.

In the new capital of the kingdom, Fontaine, within the centrally located Lacepede Castle, Queen Eleonora received a large amount of reports every day.

To avoid overburdening the new Queen, Martina helped to filter through the reports and only forward the most urgent.

“...As expected, everyone is on edge.”

“Regrettably, our national power is comparatively weak. With this recent draw, especially when this draw involved ‘those people’, it is to no one’s surprise that the morale is low among the populace.”

Eleonora let out a deep sigh as she looked up from the report on hand. She was fully aware of her inexperience in governance, and other than the occasional reports on the progress of the war, she tried to be open to advice and suggestions. Recently, one topic seemed to be particularly trending among her subjects.

Her eyes soon swam to the carefree knight standing in the corner of the room.

“Archid-san, do you have a moment? There is a matter I wish to consult you.”

“Ah? Me? Sure. If it is something I can answer.”

As Eleonora’s designated knight, Chid was given charge of the security of the Queen, and was in the room as a bodyguard. As far as Silhouette Knights and Knight Runners were concerned, Chid was relatively well informed and would be able to provide a splendid answer for any question. But when it came to politics, Chid was unsure what Eleonora could possibly ask of a neophyte like him, and was understandably nervous.

“How are the Silver Phoenix Knights... no, Ernesti-san doing as of late? For what transpired a few days ago, is he perhaps... depressed about the outcome?”

“How could that possibly be? Eru is perfectly fine. Sure, he was unable to win, but I can’t possibly see him despair. If anything, he is secretly plotting some plan to take revenge with Boss, and definitely up to no good as always.”

Although unsure of her intentions with the question, Chid gave Eleonora a clear answer.

Both Eleonora and Martina could not completely confirm Chid’s statement,

but they did sense from Chid that ‘All is well with Ernesti-san’.

“...Could I possibly set up a meeting to talk with Ernesti-san?” After a moment of pause, Eleonora asked.



Eru soon arrived at the office to answer the Queen’s summon.

“Silver Phoenix Knights Commander, Ernesti Echevalier, here at the Queen’s behest.”

“Thank you for coming at such a busy time.”

Initially somewhat skeptical of Eru’s condition, Eleonora was relieved to find Eru in relatively good spirits. His smile still shined with his usual kindness, and seemed to be oddly cheerful for some reason. For Eleonora, Eru’s personality remained as nebulous as ever.

“As for the matter at hand, it is related to our battle with the Flying Dragon a few days ago. During that encounter, despite Ernesti-san’s valiant performance, we were still unable to reclaim the fortress. Worse still, our failure has let an air of anxiety spread within the ranks.”

The draw of the Silver Phoenix Knights, and more importantly, the draw of the Demon God ‘Ikaruga’, has been quite the shock for the entire New Kuscheperca Royal Army.

After all, the Demon God has the capability to singlehandedly wipe out an entire battalion of the black knight ‘Tyrantors’, a power that was difficult for anyone to wrap their head around. Therefore, to the rank and file, it was believed that no matter how terrible the rumors about the Flying Dragon may be, as long as they have Ikaruga on their side, victory would be assured. As such, the reality that even with the presence of Ikaruga and the Silver Phoenix Knights on the field, they still failed to achieve total victory, was a difficult pill to swallow.

“I see, that was because we usually have the initiative in battles. In that encounter, it was already difficult for us to fight an unprepared defensive battle, not to mention that the Flying Dragon happened to be an incredibly strong weapons platform, particularly that flamethrower attack which easily

tore through the fortress. In my honest opinion, I could not see that Dragon as your run-of-the-mill Levitate Ship, if anything, it is a revolutionary design that is closer to a Silhouette Knight in function.”

“Is it an enemy that could not be defeated even by Ernesti-san and the rumored Demon God, Ikaruga? Not only me, but many soldiers are uneasy with that fact, so with this opportunity, I wish to hear Ernesti-san’s opinion on the Flying Dragon. What manner of enemy was the Flying Dragon? And, if you were to challenge the Flying Dragon again, do you have confidence in victory?”

Despite her apprehensive question, Eru did not at all seem worried about the prospects, and displayed his usual cheerful self as he began his explanation.

“The reason for the draw in the previous battle was purely because I lacked a fundamental understanding of the physical laws in this world, and succumbed to ‘Ether Toxicity’ due to my lack of preparation. As such, I doubt it will ever happen a second time. On the other hand, the Flying Dragon had weakness in itself, for which I undoubtedly believe they will prepare countermeasures. Our next encounter will likely be a clean slate for the both of us, so I do not have absolute confidence to win with just Ikaruga. However, rest assured that I will definitely prepare all that is necessary to slay the Flying Dragon once and for all.”

“By the way, Ernesti-san, what is ‘Ether Toxicity’?” Passing an unfamiliar term, Eleonora could not help but ask.

“In the skies, the higher the altitude, the greater the concentration of atmospheric Ether. For our bodies that were acclimated to the low atmospheric Ether on the surface, prolonged exposure to a high Ether environment would have adverse effects. For the purpose of explanation, I refer to the symptoms collectively as ‘Ether Toxicity’.”

Other than Eleonora, it was also the first time Martina and Chid had heard about ‘Ether Toxicity’. If it weren’t for the fact that they knew Eru had flew to the edge of the sky, they would have a hard time accepting what was just said. Yet, Martina soon realized a discrepancy in the story, if not a terribly annoying truth.

“From the reports, it seemed that the Flying Dragon had no problem with the

high altitude. Does this mean that on top of being incredibly strong, it also can function far beyond our own limits? If they take advantage of that, it would be doubly difficult to...”

“I agree with that assessment. As far as technology related to flight is concerned, the enemy is undoubtedly a few steps ahead of us. However, if it is only combat, there are always methods to negate their advantage. To put it simply, we should not have to worry as long as we do not give it the opportunity to reach that high an altitude.”

Eru made it sound easy, but could it really be done? Martina was visibly distressed about their prospects. Certainly, without the defeat of the Flying Dragon, there could be no peace in New Kuscheperca.

“I do not doubt Ernesti-san’s strength. But, against an opponent as strong as the Dragon, is it really possible to triumph?”

Unlike the more politically-minded Martina, Eleonora was clearly worried about Eru’s well-being. For a Queen, some may see this as a weakness, but it was an important part of her character.

“Only the Silver Phoenix Knights could keep up with you and Ikaruga, but I had heard that even the Knights suffered numerous casualties from the previous encounter. If that was the case, how would you go about fighting the Flying Dragon?” Martina asked.

As far as Martina was aware, there existed no other Silhouette Knight in the world that could match against Ikaruga. Even if Eru spoke of assistance in the upcoming battle, Martina has no idea what he could possibly bring to achieve that end.

“The battlefield between the Flying Dragon and me will be in the sky, so I doubt the Silver Phoenix Knights would be of much help under those conditions. Therefore, I will likely rely on the Levitate Ship we captured at Missillier.”

“Eru, the ship we captured was just a normal Levitate Ship. To bring that ship into a fight against the Flying Dragon, don’t you think it would be a poor match-up?” Chid interjected into the conversation.

“That is correct. Therefore, our first order of business is to work with Boss and redesign the Levitate Ship into a warship that could hold its own against the Flying Dragon. Although I am somewhat reluctant to use our valuable specimen, it can’t be helped if it is for the sake of victory.”

“...I wonder if you can still call it a Levitate Ship by the time you are done with it.” Chid let out an involuntary shrug.

Sitting nearby, Eleonora was also amazed by Eru, but for a different reason than Chid. To her, Eru and the Silver Phoenix Knights did not seem to be fazed by any obstacles. They courageously took up the seemingly impossible task to reclaim lost territory from Žaloudek, and where others fled, they stood their ground against the overwhelming Levitate Ships. In time, they overcame one impossible task after another, and forged an almost legendary fame.

“How could you keep on fighting despite all the setbacks? ...Does Ernesti-san know no fear?” To satiate her curiosity, Eleonora could not help but ask.

From their age, Eru was not much different from Eleonora. Other than their gender, the biggest difference was Eru’s willingness to challenge an enemy of indescribable strength. Even when the world itself seemed to stand in his way, Eru still continued to advance, almost as if the term ‘pessimism’ did not exist in his dictionary. In a way, Eru was in stark contrast to Eleonora, who have from time to time felt lost and bewildered in her new role, and was what brought Eleonora to the question – to identify what drove Eru, and through it, perhaps find the answer to her own inadequacies.

As if sensing Eleonora’s inner conflict, Eru’s face turned serious, and gave his heartfelt answer.

“Building and piloting Silhouette Knights are my passion, and are my only desires in life. As long as ‘this life’ exists, that fact will never change. Be it powerful dragons or insurmountable obstacles, it only means my Silhouette Knights will need to climb to even greater heights. There will always be improvements to be had. If you think like that, is there not joy even in the greatest difficulty?”

“But, I would still feel the difficulty...”

Receiving Chid’s rebuttal, Eru looked quite displeased. Although his passion

could clearly be felt, there was no one who could truly understand him.

In this complicated atmosphere, only Eleonora seemed to be deep in contemplation for what was said.



In the somber atmosphere of New Kuscheperca, a group continued to engage their work with passion. Or rather, they were so overwhelmed by the mountain of tasks that they had no time to worry.

“Good! It is time for the shift change. Those who are rested, get moving!”

At a base near Fontaine, a temporary ‘Levitate Ship Workshop’ was established. From the moment the Silver Phoenix Knights’ engineers arrived, they had been working day and night investigating and modifying the Levitate Ship. At the captured ship’s helm sat Boss, who barked one order after another at the other engineers.

“Boss, everyone is ready!”

“Very well, let’s test this baby out. Begin mana transfer!”

“Aye!”

Batson and the other engineers excitedly responded, and began to operate the various controls on the bridge. Originally, there were only voicepipes to transmit orders to every corner of the ship, but now the bridge had seen plenty new additions.

“Ethereic Levitator, all status normal. Begin ether injection.”

All hands stared intently at the operation procedures, carefully pulling each lever and pressing each button. When the indicator reached the baseline, they felt a unique feeling wash over them.

“Ether concentration rising, reaching levitation threshold!”

“Very well, pull up the anchor! Contact all hands, tell them to lay off the Blow Engine for now!”

With his orders transmitted through the voicepipes, the engineers began to retract the anchors. Only until the ship had safely floated up did Boss let out his

nervous breath and wipe away his sweat.

“...Good, all systems normal. Still, that Etheric Levitator sure is a finicky device. It would begin to act up if we even slightly deviate from the accepted procedure...”

The words Boss spoke came from his personal experience. In an earlier experiment to test the limits of the Levitate Ship, they almost sank the ship itself. Although the Etheric Levitator was a simple construct, the operation of the levitation field and the Ether was surprisingly complex. As such, the reactor room previously could not do without the gentle touch of human operators, but that was all in the past now.

“With how smooth everything is operating, the connection between the Etheric Levitator and the Magius Engine seems to be working splendidly.”

The main modification they made to this Levitate Ship was to have the Etheric Levitator fully automated.

Previously, Levitate Ships had little to no automation. From controlling the concentration of Etheric Levitator, to operating the Blow Engine, everything had to be done by hand. The Silver Phoenix Knights decided to trim down on the number of hands needed by incorporating automation, with all control centralized to the bridge, and would no longer require the extensive network of voicepipes to deliver orders. The large amount of machinery on the bridge, with their assortment of levers and buttons, was to this end.

“Although there are still some rough edges, at the very least, we were able to get the ship running with Silver Phoenix Knights’ limited hands.”

“...This is all because of how complex the procedures were.”

The main motivation behind their remodeling efforts was largely due to the difficulty that the Silver Phoenix Knights encountered in the ship’s operation. Beside their obvious lack of familiarity and experience with the ship, the bigger issue was that they were woefully understaffed. For even the rudimentary maneuvers, they needed a minimum number of crew at each station. The sheer manpower that the ship demanded simply exceeded the Silver Phoenix Knights’ limitations.

The solution that the engineers came up with was to incorporate a Magius Engine onto the ship, using newly written formulas to remove the need for human operators, and connecting the device to each component with silver nerves. Obviously, Eru was responsible for all the technical components.

When Eru first laid his eyes on the Levitate Ship, he could barely contain his excitement, and had researched every nook and cranny aboard. In his passion to discover the mechanisms behind the Etheric Levitator, Eru almost ended up breaking it. The aerial acrobatics that the ship made during Eru's adventures was a memory few on-board engineers wished to recall, but that was a story for another day.

As far as the Magius Engine was concerned, much of its formulas were based on Eru's experience from that time. Although the ship was still far from being considered 'fully automated', at the minimum, they were able to expedite many of the convoluted procedures.

"So we basically reduced the system from one which is completely uncooperative to one that acts mischievously from time to time."

Such was the heartfelt evaluation given by the Boss at the time. Even without full automation, they had managed to make leap and bounds, with the operation now somewhat tenable.

Soon after the trial, Eru was able to obtain the results, and worked with the Boss to summarize their findings.

"With the new Magius Engine in place, we were able to not only strengthen the coordination of different stations, but also cut down on the number of crew. All that's left is redesigning the propulsion system. If we are talking about a suitable replacement for the Blow Engine, I guess the most likely candidate is to install some sort of magic thruster?"

"Haa... I think this is as good as we will get. Shy of relying on Ikaruga's engines, I doubt the magic output would match the demand for a thruster-based propulsion system."

"That is certainly a problem, I don't want to sit with my Ikaruga on the ship all day..."

The original plan was to have the ship support Ikaruga in combat against the Flying Dragon. If their modified ship instead ended up restricting Ikaruga's movements, it would essentially be getting their priorities mixed up.

"Other than the propulsion system, there is also the weapons system. We need a weapon strong enough to bring down that heavily armored dragon. I have an inkling as to which one we should use, but it will increase Boss's workload by quite a bit. However, I am certain it will be the best weapon to slay the Flying Dragon."

"So what are you thinking about, boy?"

Eru completely glossed over Boss's uneasiness, and was seemingly deep in thought. Despite Eru's apparent lackadaisical attitude, his mind was in overdrive.

"I heard the Flying Dragon was quite incredible. No matter how strong you are, it seemed to be quite a stretch for you to take on the dragon with Ikaruga alone. As such, is it really such a big deal to draw against such a behemoth?" Seeing Eru's boundless passion, Boss inquisitively asked.

"Winning is very important, but more than anything, I could not bear with the Dragon's existence. If I have to point to a reason, it would be the sheer size of its body. Such a large structure would surely take an obscene amount of magic to maintain, and from my knowledge, there are only so many options when it comes to replenishing magic power."

If not for one supersized reactor, then the ship would require numerous parallel reactors, as such, the problem lay less with technology and more with resources. It was hard for Eru to imagine a nation like Žaloudek to be in possession of a large Ether Reactor like the 'Emperor's Heart'. As such, the most reasonable conclusion was that the Flying Dragon relied on a massive amount of parallel reactors.

Although such innovative thoughts were nothing new to the Silver Phoenix Knights, Eru was surprised that there existed another forward thinker in the world to come up with such outlandish ideas. However, given how often the Silver Phoenix Knights broke the sensibilities of the world, it is not hard to imagine others like them would eventually pop up.

“By concentrating large amount of Ether Reactors, powerful weapons like the Flying Dragon could easily be made. But therein lays the problem... If the multi-reactor weapons platform were demonstrated to be clearly superior to single-reactor Silhouette Knights, then sooner or later, other multi-reactor weapons platform would begin to appear in the world. Conversely speaking, the numbers of Silhouette Knights in the world would decrease to fuel the multi-reactor weapons platform’s construction.”

For the people of this world, both Silhouette Knight and the Flying Dragon Battleship were mere weapons, and as weapons, would demand associated costs for transportation and maintenance. Although the Flying Dragon Battleship was incredibly strong, its technological demands far exceeded the skill of an average engineer, as such, both the repair and maintenance were costly endeavors. At most, the battleship could only be effectively used on decisive battles.

On the other hand, Silhouette Knights were a technology that was considered staple to the world. Even if there was a growing interest in multi-reactor weapons platform, Silhouette Knights would not immediately turn obsolete. Yet, for the robot otaku Ernesti, such a development was something he could not accept.

“I will use this opportunity to thoroughly erase the existence of that ‘piece of trash’, so that Silhouette Knights will continue to serve a central role in this world. ‘My world’ does not need trash like that in it!”

“...O-oh.”

Even Boss was taken aback by Eru’s passion. The high morale certainly was welcome given the approaching battle, so Boss simply chose to ignore the more problematic details.

With this, the stage was set for the fated battle between the Death God and the Flying Dragon. Neither could tolerate the continued existence of the other, and both would stop at nothing until the other was utterly demolished.

Under the strangely selfish reason of the Knights Commander, the Silver Phoenix Knights noisily took to the reconstruction of the Levitate Ship.



Soon, the peace and quiet that had reigned the land was abruptly broken.

The two kingdoms were once again broiled in war, spearheaded by the return of the Flying Dragon. New Kuscheperca's border forts were once more open to the terrifying attacks of the Dragon.

As another fortress fell to the sea of flames, the news quickly made its way to Fontaine. All the local nobles gathered in Lacepede Castle to discuss possible countermeasures to the new wave of attacks.

Reflective of the noble's unease, the atmosphere was exceptionally heavy in the meeting room.

"Ugh... It has returned! That bastard dragon has laid waste to our land, fortresses, and men."

"Won't it be fine as long as we increase the amount of Revantiers and Magic Javelins?"

"Like that will be enough! It was an opponent even the Silver Phoenix Knights could not defeat, who knows what we could possibly do to counter it..."

From the start of the meeting, an air of pessimism washed over the room. Each and every noble grumbled about the difficulties, with not a constructive idea in sight, and the meeting room soon devolved into chaos.

To steer away from the worsening atmosphere, Eru took to the floor.

"The enemy and their tactics are the same as before. With the Flying Dragon as vanguard supported by a small group of ground forces on Levitate Ships, they rely heavily on guerilla tactics and mobility of the ships to avoid the risk of encirclement. (1) It is a type of formation that takes full advantage of the Flying Dragon's overwhelming firepower and the Levitate Ships' incredible mobility."

Despite the simplicity of the tactics employed, the crux of the matter lay with the Flying Dragon, for which the current New Kuscheperca had no legitimate counter.

"But why would they satisfy themselves with just attacking our fortresses? If they had such overwhelming power at their disposal, should they not just come after Fontaine directly?" One of the noble inquired.

Faced with the difficult question, the nobles all just looked at each other without a single sound.

Soon, a single voice broke the uncomfortable silence. Surprisingly, the one who took up the question was Queen Eleonora. She had never had a martial education, and should not have much knowledge on the discussed matter. As such, in all the previous economic and military discussions, she had always opted to remain silent.

“The Flying Dragon fears the Silver Phoenix Knights... no, Ernesti-san. Ernesti-san was able to singlehandedly hold his own against the Flying Dragon, and if we add our own war potential to the mix...”

Her words cleared the stagnant air surrounding the discussion. Although Ikaruga did not sink the Flying Dragon in the earlier encounter, it did hold its own against the beast. Despite the army abandoning the fortress in the end, it was still far from a complete rout.

With the renewed hope, the nobles once again energized themselves in discussion.

“Then, before we suffer even greater damage, we should gather our troops and take out the Flying Dragon! With the Silver Phoenix Knights in the vanguard, and our own troops in support, victory should be simple.”

“If we do, then the black knights that line our border will be free to advance and run rampage in our lands. Likely, the Flying Dragon will also avoid our challenge.”

The nobles shirked back after hearing Eru’s criticism. They were so caught up with the Flying Dragon that they almost forgot about the masses of black knights that line their borders. Both were powerful adversaries that New Kuscheperca could not ignore, and would need to be simultaneously overcome.

“First and foremost, we need to contain the black knights from taking advantage of the chaos. A method that allow us to take out the Flying Dragon without compromising our defenses... The best choice for the task undoubtedly falls on the Silver Phoenix Knights.”

“Since we already fought with the enemy once, we are familiar with their

capabilities. If anything, we won't make the same mistake as last time. Granted, this will be a tough battle, as even Ikaruga will have a hard time break through its defensive lightning. If anything, our chance of victory will be greatly improved once the Levitate Ship in our possession is fully remodeled."

Despite the engineers working day and night on the Levitate Ship, the remodeling would still take some time to complete.

"Then, what do you suggest we do in the meantime? The damage inflicted by the Flying Dragon has been crippling. If we do nothing, then our war potential will slowly waste away and will no longer be able to maintain adequate defenses along the front. Before the Silver Phoenix Knights are ready, who knows how much losses we will incur..."

Before the Silver Phoenix Knights were fully prepared, the nobles lacked an effective method to deter the Dragon's attacks. It was an imposing foe that the powerful Ikaruga couldn't handle, so much so that even if the nobles gathered up all their Revantiers, they would still not be an adequate match against it.

"On the contrary, if we simply do nothing, the casualties will just continue to mount up. We should take the opportunity to strike at their weakness."

"...The seat of viceroyalty. You plan to retake the old capital, Delvincourt... is that right?"

With shock and bewilderment, everyone's gaze quickly focused on Eru, who made the comment. Eleonora was once again the one who broke the silence, and spoke with a face full of resolve.

"...We do not have many options. Either we allow the Flying Dragon to walk all over us, and lose everything, or we take back our capital, and cleanse Žaloudek from our lands once and for all."

With Eleonora's declaration, chatter broke out among the nobles. It was certainly a plan that could break the current stalemate, but there were considerable risks involved.

"We agree with her majesty in principle, but to undertake such a plan is sheer folly. We will be cutting deep into enemy territory, and we don't know how many black knights we will encounter at Delvincourt! Additionally, to commit to

such an offensive means to gather all our available forces, if so, who will stay to defend Fontaine...?!”

“Knowing the risks, I believe her majesty has decided to go all out?”

“...Yes.”

The short exchange between Eru and Eleonora took all the nobility by surprise, especially when they had just explained how the plan would be a costly mistake.

“We only need to defend Fontaine because of my presence here. Instead, if I campaign with the troops, we will no longer require a significant force to defend, and can devote all our resources to the offensive.”

To her statements, the nobles momentarily were at a loss for words. They had always believed the Queen was unfamiliar with matters of war, and had simply spewed nonsense. However, after a moment of contemplation, they realized her ideas were not completely outrageous. If they could only devote their resources to either attack or defense, then to break the stalemate, they had to attack. Certainly, New Kuscheperca was at the point where they had little left to lose in the gamble.

The biggest concern they had was with the ‘Queen’ herself. From the perspective of a vassal, it was difficult to ask the Queen to risk herself on the battlefield.

“I am certain of this decision. Before, I was too hesitant when it came to the important decisions, and would shy away from any gambles. My inexperience had brought about many deaths, which I do not wish to repeat. Therefore, before more of our subjects die, we shall reclaim Žaloudek’s seat of viceroyalty... no, the old capital, Delvincourt.” Despite the nobles’ reservations, Eleonora herself seemed to have steeled herself with a smile.

The nobles had all been overwhelmed by the young Queen’s display of will. Even though they were only lesser nobility, they were nevertheless warriors who have survived many wars. They might act respectful for the young Queen in public, but in their hearts, they had always slighted the one they thought was no more than a mere figurehead. However, their prejudice was completely overturned with her valiant display at the meeting, where not only did she point

out the best way forward, but also fully demonstrated her will to reclaim the old capital.

“With that said, I have a personal request for Ernesti-san. At the time when we advance on Žaloudek...”

“The Flying Dragon will surely show itself.”

Hearing Eru’s assessment, Eleonora, despite being somewhat apprehensive, nodded in acknowledgment.

“Even if we were to reclaim our lost capital and defeat the viceroyalty, the Flying Dragon will still exist as a prominent threat to our rule. Therefore, like we did at Missillier, let me serve as the ‘bait’ once more.”

However, the current situation was quite different from their time at Missillier. Back then, the Žaloudek Army was overconfident, and easily crumbled when the tides had turned. In contrast, the campaign would penetrate deep into enemy’s defenses, and attack their headquarters. They would undoubtedly defend to the death with a sober mind. Despite the mounting difficulties, Eru still did not show a single hint of hesitation.

“I understand. If that is the case, then just leave the dragon to us. Going up against the Flying Dragon with a large army is unwise, therefore, we shall have Ikaruga and a few other elites to hunt the dragon down.”

“Would Ernesti-san’s remodeled Levitate Ship be ready in time?”

“In the name of the Silver Phoenix Knights, we are certain to see it finished, even if we have to make final adjustments on way to the battlefield.”

With Eru’s seemingly innocent promise, the engineers of the Silver Phoenix Knights would come to see hell.

“As the Queen of Kuscheperca, I am ashamed to have to leave the fate of our kingdom in other hands.” Eleonora nodded with a hint of worry.



“Do not mind it, Your Majesty.”

Undoubtedly, the one with the greatest burden in the upcoming campaign would be Eru, but he still replied with his usual cheerful smile.

“I must prove that ‘my robot, Ikaruga, is superior to Levitate Ships’. For this reason, I am willing to gamble everything I have to see the destruction of the Flying Dragon.”

Behind his innocent smile, there permeated a certain madness, so much so that even Eleonora was taken aback. She was just glad that the target of his madness matched the goal of the kingdom.

With this, New Kuscheperca came to decide on the ludicrous plan to ‘abandon all defenses’ for the single decisive battle against Žaloudek.



With the meeting over, Eru soon found himself standing before the full force of the Silver Phoenix Knights.

“The decisive battle has been set! All that’s left is to wrap up our preparations! Things will likely get busy for the engineers, so keep up the good work! Chid, Ady, I have an important mission for you two and Tzendrinble.”

“Got it! Just leave it to us!”

“...Yes.”

When his name was mentioned, Chid was not looking at Eru, but to the far back where Eleonora stood. Seeing his uncertain nod, Eleonora clasped both her hands, as if making a gesture to pray for his safety. With that exchange, Chid then turned his sight on Eru, and gave a strong nod.

“Understood. It is about time we cut down their arrogance and boot them from this land once and for all!”

With the decision made, the Silver Phoenix Knights now steeled themselves for the upcoming battle.

(1) Mechanized infantry + Tank breakthroughs, where have we heard that before? Oh right, WW2.

Chapter 43: The Queen's Campaign

The thunderous footsteps of metal giants broke the early morning calm. To a bystander, the chaotic rumbling and deep vibrations could easily be mistaken for an untimely earthquake.

It was the capital of New Kuscheperca, Fontaine. At the moment, countless Silhouette Knights gathered before the gates. Among them were the Resvant Vidos, also known as the 'Tower Knights', and the Revantiers, the newest mass-produced model. These two models made up the core of New Kuscheperca's royal retinue and standing army, also known as the Royal Life Guards.

The Guards have expanded to such an incredible size that their numerous Silhouette Knights seemed to stretch from the foot of the wall to the far horizon. Faced with such a sight, it was difficult for any onlooker to imagine the uncertainty that stood before them. The introduction of Silhouette Gears has greatly relieved the logistical bottleneck, and has led to a significant increase in production. By now, the new Royal Army has recovered much of the former splendor of its predecessor.

The Guards soon came to a halt. As the shaking of the ground stopped, only the quiet humming of the air intake valves remained. As a gust of wind blew past the foot of the metal giants, bringing with it the dust of their march, a glittering Silhouette Knight rode out through the gates of Fontaine at the rear of the column, and slowly made its way to the front of the Guards. It was an extravagant Silhouette Knight covered in richly decorated armor – the lost 'King's Mount'. More accurate to say, it is not the same as the Mount from before, as the previous one was destroyed alongside the late king. What stood before them now was the newly rebuilt 'Kartoga Ol Cauchard Secundus'.

At its appearance, all the Guards knelt in unison. From their chests, Knight Runners came out of their cockpits and stood at attention as the Silhouette Knights' armor peeled away. Faced with loyal knights, Kartoga Ol Cauchard Secundus also came to a stop, and opened its chest armor in response as everyone's gaze was fixed on the person who emerged. As the King's Mount, it was the Silhouette Knight meant for the sovereign, and logically, the one who

appeared from Kartoga Ol Cauchard Secundus was none other than the Queen Regnant, Eleonora.

The Queen's appearance had stunned all the Knight Runners, as the one before them was no longer the sheltered flower that they remembered from the past. Before them stood a woman dressed, not in an elegant evening gown, but in a full combat suit meant for Knight Runners. The famed beauty known across the western lands stood before them with an unwavering will, slightly blunted by exhaustion. Like a wildflower, alluring yet resilient, Eleonora no longer had any of the uncertainty that had once plagued her in her eyes, and with a deep breath, she looked out toward the gathered forces.

"Brave knights of Kuscheperca, we have endured...! During the night when our beautiful capital Delvincourt was consumed by the flames of war, we learned of our powerlessness, and suffered defeat at the hands of a despicable but powerful enemy. In a single night, we were robbed of countless things precious to us. They took away our homes, burned our land, and killed our beloved king..."

The loudspeakers mounted on the King's Mount carried her voice far and wide. The quietly listening knights slowly clenched their fist, seemingly remembering the night when the old capital fell to invasion.

"However, through the support of our allies, we stand tall once more! Our new shields could resist the blows of those who wish to enslave us, and our new swords could pierce those who meant us harm. Despite all this, our rebuilt kingdom is now under threat by the terrible Flying Dragon. The Dragon... is unbelievably strong, and if we let it freely rampage through our land, the tragedy of 'that night' will surely repeat!"

The atmosphere surrounding the knights began to heat up, but no one knew if it was from the vast congregation of Silhouette Knights or the knights' own broiling rage. Even when faced with likely defeat, not one knight showed any fear. All their faces were flushed with an unshakable resolve. Like a bow in full draw, the knights eagerly awaited for the Queen's order to unleash them upon the invaders and retake their homeland.

"...But we will not sit idly by as tragedy comes to our doorsteps. We shall no

longer hide behind our meager walls, but with our own two hands, take back what is rightfully ours...! I, Eleonora Miranda Kuscheperca, the Queen Regnant of Kuscheperca, command you...!”

Eleonora’s eyes held no tear, for she was no longer trapped by her old hesitant and anxious self. Below her, Kartoga Ol Cauchard Secundus drew its sword and pointed squarely at the distant capital.

“Brave knights of Kuscheperca... onward! To reclaim our country and capital from those who wish us dead! *Audentes Fortuna iuvat!*”

“””Oooh!!”””

As a thunderous roar echoed at Eleonora’s declaration, the masses of Silhouette Knights sprang into action. The Guards marched with a single purpose – to liberate Delvincourt from the grips of Žaloudek. It was a campaign that committed the entirety of Kuscheperca’s Royal Life Guards, a truly decisive undertaking for the kingdom. The Guards advanced with a vigor and resolve reminiscent of Žaloudek’s on the fateful night.

In their column, many Resvant Vidos marched with the Revantiers. Certainly, the heavily armored Resvant Vido were not built with mobility in mind, so in order to not burden the pace of the army, they had most of their unwieldy ‘Bulwark Robe’ removed and transported separately in wagons. Granted, before any battle, they will need time to reattach the robes, but that was still much more preferable to having the entire army match the pace of the fully laden Vidos.

Behind the core of Silhouette Knights, the massive wagon train followed with their supplies, flanked on both sides by vigilant knights piloting Silhouette Gears.

At the center of the formation marched Kartoga Ol Cauchard Secundus, with another richly decorated Silhouette Knight – Emrys’ Gordesleo – marching alongside the King’s Mount.

“Hahaha! That was a splendid speech! I guess Ellie really is used to the duties of a Queen now~”

“R-really? I feel like there is still much to work on. I just hope my speech

earlier didn't bring shame to the title of Queen." A nervous reply came from inside Kartoga Ol Cauchard Secundus.

"Everything in that speech was written by Ellie... no, Her Majesty. Do not worry, I am certain Your Majesty did wonderfully." From 'behind' Eleonora, another voice rang out.

"...Isadora. Why are you acting so distant? It is making me terribly uncomfortable."

"It is a proper part of etiquette. After all, you are now the Queen of this country."

Kartoga Ol Cauchard Secundus was uniquely designed with two pilots. One of them was Eleonora, and the other was her cousin, Isadora. Logically speaking, a King's Mount should only be piloted by the sovereign, but the current Queen have never had any piloting lessons, and struggled with even the most basic maneuvers. As such, during the construction of Secundus, it was purposely modified to allow two pilots. Granted, Secundus did not have the same spacious design as Centaur Silhouette Knight 'Tzendorg', so the interior was unusually cramped.

"More importantly, I am sorry, Isadora. Because of my own ineptitude, I had to make you come with me onto the battlefield." Eleonora let out a long sigh as she kept her eyes focused on the road.

"Do not worry. Since you had already resolved yourself to war, it would only be proper for me to accompany along. After all, you are not the only one who wants to take back our country~" With no one to listen in on their conversation, Isadora reverted to her usual familiar tone.

"Also, Emrys-san. The Queen and I... the Queen's Mount could not reasonably fight and will serve as no more than a figurehead. Therefore, be sure to keep us safe." Isadora opened comms and said to the nearby Emrys.

To ensure the campaign's success, they could ill-afford to leave anything that needed defending in Fontaine. Such was the only reason why Eleonora, who had no experience in piloting or commanding, had to participate in the campaign. On the battlefield, her only purpose was to serve as the figurehead 'Queen', but it was a task she could leave to no one else.

For a dangerous gamble like reclaiming the old capital, there was undoubtedly anxiety within the populace, but it was also a mission they could not ignore.

As such, the transcendent and beautiful Queen was the perfect symbol to rally the troops. With the tragic tale of how she lost her father in the first battle, the troops would certainly respond positively to her presence. Although the Queen was a neophyte in command, she was unmatched in her effect on the morale.

Additionally, a personally-led campaign to recover the lost capital had a symbolic meaning in and of itself, and would serve to solidify her rule after the war. Therefore, after weighing all the options, they had opted for the King's Mount to be a two-pilot Silhouette Knight even if it was slightly inappropriate. Fully aware of the reasons, Emrys let out a smile at Isadora's request.

"Mm. The main battle formation is certainly the most dangerous location on a battlefield, since it is where the fiercest fighting will take place! But worry not, no harm shall come to Isadora and Ellie as long as I and Gordesleo draw breath... Not to mention, we also have them on guard..."

Gordesleo turned its head around, as if prompting to their immediate vicinity. Surrounding Secundus and Gordesleo were the chosen elites of the Guards. In addition, there were also the wagoned Centaur Knights, the Red and White Companies, and the six-armed Demon God – the full force of the Silver Phoenix Knights.

"With the Silver Phoenix Knights here, even the Flying Dragon dare not harm you." Emrys declared with a smirk.

From behind Gordesleo, the Reds and the Whites raised their weapons in affirmation to the declaration.

"Alright, I shall place my trust in everyone." Isadora remarked.

At that moment, a large shadow floated across the marching troops. The Levitate Ship leisurely cruised overhead, its body adorned with the emblem of the Kingdom of New Kuscheperca and the crest of the Silver Phoenix.

"...So is that Ernesti-san's newly modified ship?"

“Yes. It may not be apparent, but it seemed Boss and Eru had made some last minute modifications. Behind its innocuous exterior, who knows what sort of nasty contraptions it has hidden underneath...”

If what was said earlier was true, then the Levitate Ship would certainly be worthy to serve as the ‘trump card’ against the Flying Dragon. Curiously enough, Chid, who tend to never stray far from Eleonora, was aboard that vessel.



Kingdom of Žaloudek, Kuscheperca Territory’s eastern border.

For the Old Kingdom of Kuscheperca, the eastern border meant the Aubigne Mountains. However, for Žaloudek’s occupied territory, which has to deal with the resurgent kingdom, the eastern border meant what were originally the borders between the two regions of Old Kuscheperca.

Along the new border, the outposts turned fortresses were hotly contested between the two powers, as their exchange during the Grand Western Storm quickly turned into a war of attrition.

Žaloudek’s defensive forces were primarily composed of black knights. The black knights’ incredible strength and tough armor, coupled with their poor mobility, made them the ideal unit to line the defense.

Stationed atop the high walls of the fortress, the ten mels black knights stood tall, perfect for sentry duty with their height. The Silhouette Runners within kept their eyes peeled to the monitor for any unusual movements on the horizon.

The calm and uneventful morning soon changed as shadows appeared in the thick morning fog.

“...!! Emergency! Enemy Attack!!”

The black knights’ response was fluid and precise. With the siren sounded, the humming of the Ether Reactor from nearby Silhouette Knights quickened as the defenders mobilized themselves into action.

“Another group for some morning sparring? Seriously, how eager are they for

their deaths...”

“As long as we are around, I doubt they-... Wait? Over there...?!”

From the distant forest, more and more Silhouette Knights appeared through the fog, their hands bearing the standard of New Kuscheperca, and slowly closed in on the fortress.

Before the Kuschepercan advance, the black knights began to waver. There were simply too many enemies, especially for a fortress of its size. No matter how strong the black knights were defensively, against such overwhelming numbers, they had no chance at victory.

“...Perhaps they finally decided to take out this fortress?”

“No, wait a minute, something is odd... For them to deploy such a large force, their defenses elsewhere must be severely weakened. Have they decided to go all-in?”

The black knights could not help but feel a chill. They have heard of how the Flying Dragon was pushing the Kingdom of New Kuscheperca to the brink of annihilation. However, the final throes of a kingdom were not to be underestimated, especially one known to have a sizable military force.

“T-that is the King’s Mount! The Queen has finally moved to campaign?!” The black knights exclaimed as they caught sight of the shimmering Secundus.

As it stood, their worst nightmare has become a reality. Faced with overwhelming numbers and unwavering morale, the black knights could do nothing to resist the onslaught. Before long, the fortress was adorned with the colors of New Kuscheperca.



The news was quick to reach Delvincourt.

The anxious messenger ran through the hallways and knelt before Viceroy Catalina.

“...A-after the New Kuschepercan Army captured the fort, they showed no sign of stopping their advance! T-their forces are estimated to be at least a full b-brigade strength, numbering over a hundred S-Silhouette Knights!!” The

messenger reported to an expressionless Catalina.

“Isn’t that their whole army?! Wait, won’t it mean they had completely forsaken their defense? If we launch an attack on their capital, Fontaine, we could wipe them out in one fell swoop!!” Standing nearby, one of the Knights Commander exclaimed.

“It is not as simple as you think, fool.” Catalina just waved him off, “According to the report, the King’s Mount is among the invasion force.”

“W-what?! Milady, to our knowledge, wasn’t the King’s Mount destroyed in the initial battle by Prince Cristóbal?”

“A copy... No, perhaps they had it rebuilt. Either way, how they came by the King’s Mount is of little importance. The real issue is the one piloting it.”

There was little need to guess. Before long, the Knights Commander quickly revealed a shocked expression, and turned to Catalina.

“C-could it be... the Queen herself?!”

“Who else? They had abandoned their forts and capital, and mustered all their forces for this invasion. Likely, they are under the assumption that they would be able to rebuild as long as they have their queen.” Catalina could not help but chuckle.

Certainly, Kuschepercan movements seemed rash, but at the same time, Žaloudek also faced a difficult decision.

Simply put, while Žaloudek had the option to raid the now unguarded rear, it served them little purpose to damage the infrastructure of the cities and forts they wished to claim for themselves. In their plan, they had always seen the elimination or subjugation of the royal bloodline as the most preferred method.

“Still, how reckless... For them to even abandon their capital, they must be gambling with everything on the line. If my assumptions are not mistaken, the only viable target for such a large force would be... here.” Catalina said in a soft voice as she pointed at her feet.

For everyone present, the old capital Delvincourt, now the seat of Žaloudek’s viceroyalty, was undoubtedly the only reasonable target.

“Wait... If we think about all this from a different angle, is it not preferable for us to have the Queen herself come knocking on our door? If they wish to end this farce once and for all, I am more than happy to oblige.”

In a way, the situation benefited Žaloudek as well. If they committed to a decisive battle against the Queen, they could save all the trouble of taking the rebel’s territory one fortress at a time. However, a sense of foreboding seemed to take root in the heart of Catalina.

“Send word to Lord Mardones. Since the enemy so neatly packed themselves up for us, there is no longer any need to take them out piecemeal. Let us meet their invasion force and burn it to the ground, alongside that figurehead Queen of theirs!” Catalina barked at the nearby messenger.

“Understood.”

The Flying Dragon was tasked with assaulting the Kuschepercan fortresses. Therefore, if the order did not arrive, then Žaloudek’s greatest weapon would not be able to arrive in time for the decisive battle. The messenger hastily ran out the audience chamber to deliver the orders to Doroteo, while the other officers silently went their own way to marshal their forces, leaving Catalina alone on her throne.

“A personal campaign... and here I thought that sheltered girl would be more reserved. Not that any of it matters, since she is one of my enemies that I would have to strike down if I were to consolidate our rule. There are still things to be done before the Flying Dragon Battleship’s return.” Catalina let out a deep sigh as she tapped her finger against the throne.

With that said, to finish up her final ‘preparations’, she summoned a certain someone for an audience.



“As ordered, what does Her Excellency want of me?”

The one to arrive to Catalina’s summon was Gustav. As always, he answered in a tactless manner, but with the urgency, Catalina did not pursue his insubordinate tone further.

“Rejoice, Gustav Martones, I am granting you a new Silhouette Knight to

replace the one you had lost. We can't have you on our payroll only to loaf around."

"...Yes, I understand."

In the battle against the Silver Phoenix Knights, Doroteo was in charge of the Jade Dragon Knights that ran down the routing Kuschepercan troops. Despite inflicting heavy losses on the Kuschepercans, his Silhouette Knight 'Swordsman' was completely wrecked in the ensuing battle. Although the remains were later recovered, the Silhouette Knight was deemed beyond repair in the foreseeable future. Therefore, rather than having Gustav wait for his personal Silhouette Knight to be repaired, it was more prudent to just give him another.

With a Silhouette Knight, Gustav was now able to return to active service. However, the man himself was not particularly thrilled about the prospect. For him, the slow and bumbling Tyrantor that served as the backbone of Žaloudekian Army was a terrible match to his nimble fighting style.

Compared to piloting the Swordsman, a personalized Silhouette Knight uniquely designed for his combat style, he would be hindered by the non-compatible unit, if not outright strip him of any ability to serve as the 'ace'.

Furthermore, his only alternative to the Tyrantor would be one of the captured Kuschepercan Resvants. However, with the 'Eastern Model' already in widespread use on the battlefield, he was hesitant to rely on an obsolete model.

"Come, let me show you to your new Silhouette Knight." Catalina did not care for Gustav's reservations and ordered him to follow.

She led him to the Silhouette Knights workshop in town, and down to the deepest recess within, where a solemn unit stood. When Catalina pointed the Silhouette Knight out, Gustav could not help but be flabbergasted.

"I will leave this unit in your care."

"M-milady! I-isn't this the royal exclusive model, 'Alkelorix'?!"

The 'Alkelorix' was the newest and most advanced Silhouette Knights designed specially for Žaloudek royalty. Its elegant body of pure white adorned with gold-plated rims was an undisputed masterpiece.

“That is correct. As far as Silhouette Knights are concerned, it is indeed the strongest in our arsenal, and clearly a better fit to your style than the Tyrantor. I know you have your own quirks, so I will lend you some knightsmiths for you to make adjustments as you see fit.”

Gustav was at a loss for words. It was certainly a royal favor like no other, and he was unsure how to respond to Catalina.

“C-could this unit be Prince Cristóbal’s?”

Toward his hesitant question, Catalina merely shook her head.

“Alkelorix is not considered the King’s Mount, but merely a unit that was reserved for the royals. As such, my brother was not the only one to have received one. This here is my personal unit.”

Counting the unit given to their elder brother Carlitos, there were three units of Alkelorix in total, and before them stood one of the three.

“As you may have been aware, my piloting skill is mediocre at best. However, being royalty, they had one prepared for me, even though it has served as no more than a decorative piece. Originally, I brought it along as a spare for my brother’s unit... but Cristóbal is no longer of this world. In other words, there is no longer anyone left to pilot this unit.”

Gustav could not hope to fathom the complicated emotions that swirled inside Catalina at that moment.

“You are the ace among aces in my army, but are well known for your numerous quirks – you neither like working in a group, nor enjoy piloting the black knight. Therefore, I ask you to pick up my white sword. As far as my brother’s revenge is concerned, I am certain Doroteo will see it resolved. Instead, I will ask you to defeat the Kuschepercan rebels in my stead, and return with a splendid victory.”

Since the princess had thought everything through, Gustav had little reason to refuse.

“Please leave it to me. I will use my sword to strike down all enemies that dare to stand against Her Excellency and country!” Gustav declared as he took to his knee and bowed.

Hearing Gustav's sincere promise, Catalina nodded in affirmation.



After Catalina left, Gustav continued to gaze attentively at Alkelorix. Soon, a couple of knighthsmiths appeared in the chamber.

“We are here at your command, and will remodel this unit as you deem necessary!” The knightsmiths excitedly announced.

They were designated knightsmiths for the Alkelorix, and as such, were without much work since the passing of Cristóbal. With an unprecedented task now ahead of them, the knightsmiths were not able to contain their excitement. Sadly, their excitement only lasted until Gustav opened his mouth.

“The princess said I could modify this unit as I see fit. Then... I will ask you to make that the armament.”

“Just leave it to...? Huh? S-swords? But milord, the Alkelorix already comes with a sword.”

Gustav pointed to the countless swords that lay in the corner of the workshop. However, the Alkelorix already came with a sword on its waist. As such, the knightsmiths were at a loss for what to make of his request.

Seeing the knightsmiths’ baffled expressions, Gustav could only let out a wry smile.

“That one is not enough. I want you to attach all of the swords.”

“A-all of them?! Are you serious? There are at least thirty swords!”

Understandably, the knightsmiths were bewildered by the request to install all the swords. Yet, Gustav just brushed aside their shock and staunchly stood by his decision.

“Yes. How could I function without my swords? Ah, just adding swords would not be sufficient, I will also need to have its strength increased. This way, I won’t lose to that twin-sworded bastard again!”

Gustav took to his own tempo and ordered modifications after modifications to recreate Alkelorix to match his desires. Soon, the modified unit bore little resemblance to the original Alkelorix.

“W-with all these new armaments, if we also change this... Milord, I do not think it could be piloted!”

With Gustav’s demands seemingly at random and frequently difficult to implement, the knightsmiths could not help but protest. However, Gustav was

completely fixated on his demands, and ultimately everyone failed to convince him otherwise.

“We will try our best to meet your demands... Speaking of which, since you had taken to modify the unit this much, why not give the unit a proper name?” The knightsmiths, having resigned to his demands, asked Gustav.

To the knightsmiths, the modified Silhouette Knight could no longer be called an Alkelorix, or rather, their wounded pride refused to accept it as worthy of the name.

“Ah, I had already decided on the name. My new sword was given by Princess Catalina, and served as a tribute to the late Prince Cristóbal. Therefore, I shall name this fellow... ‘Death Sword’.” Gustav said with a confident nod.



The Kuschepercan Army marched at a brisk pace toward the old capital, and had covered much ground in the short time since crossing the border. Much of their fast movement was thanks to their familiarity with the land, as they were marching through what was previously Kuschepercan territory. As such, they were able to avoid chokepoints and fortresses, and took lesser known paths to cut down on travel time.

However, as the column neared Delvincourt, they were met with a difficult problem.

On a certain evening since departing from Fontaine, Kuschepercan leaders and officers gathered before a map of the central region.

“Here lies our target, Delvincourt, and surrounding it, the Tetraspides Fortresses ‘Silda Neljak’... the last line of fortresses safekeeping the capital.” Eleonora pointed at the four interlocking fortresses, each guarding one of the cardinal directions.

Despite being the seat of a major kingdom, Delvincourt itself was built without any meaningful defense. The city relied extensively on Silda Neljak, which shielded Delvincourt from all approaches, as bulwark against attackers.

“Yet, the very fortresses we constructed to defend our capital now blocks our advance.”

With the appearance of the Levitate Ships that circumvented conventional logic, Silda Neljak could only watch helplessly as the original capital fell to the invaders. With the collapse of the regime, the fortresses were now under the firm control of Žaloudek, which ironically, now stood in the way of its rightful Queen.

“Attacking Silda Neljak by land is futile. As it stands, we will only unnecessarily drag out the siege and allow Žaloudek to marshal greater forces.” Isadora explained.

For the Kuschepercan Army, dragging out the campaign would not be ideal and they would preferably avoid a protracted siege. Beyond the more proximal reason of not allowing Žaloudek the time to marshal their forces, they had another concern for limiting the campaign length.

“Hmph... If we delay for too long, that dragon will probably catch us from behind.” Emrys crisply said as he brought his fist to his palm.

From the time when they have begun their advance, the Flying Dragon should still be in the vicinity of the borders. The greatest gamble for the Kuschepercan Army was the timing of the Flying Dragon’s return. Of the possibilities, encountering the Flying Dragon while they assault Silda Neljak was the worst case scenario.

“Certainly, it is not at the level of Silda Trider, but Silda Neljak is still incredibly tough to assault frontally. In addition to the strong walls, Silda Neljak was built atop a network of rivers and controls the only drawbridge accesses.”

For heavy mechanical Silhouette Knights, fording rivers could be said as a major weakness to their operation, as they would move sluggishly from the increased resistance in water. This would prove fatal as the defenders would have free range on the immobile Silhouette Knights. However, even if by the odd chance they survive the onslaught, the imposing gatehouse remained a daunting challenge.

“The gatehouse was designed with consideration for Silhouette Knights. It wouldn’t even budge if we unleash our shots on it. The only way to break through the gate would be with some sort of siege equipment...”

From the personalized mace of the black knights, to the large battering rams,

there were numerous types of siege equipment they could utilize. Yet, they all have the crippling flaw of their sheer weight, making them unreasonable to move across the river.

“If that is the case, then our best option would be to open the drawbridge from within.”

“Sure. I guess we can’t just ask nicely and have them open it for us...”

No defender would be dumb enough to open the gate to their enemy. In short, the only options for them were to find some way to open the gate, or destroy the gate completely – neither option was particularly enticing.

“The drawbridge is supported by steel chains. However, there are enough steel chains to make it so that one or two breaking is insufficient to drop the bridge. As such, we could rule out sabotaging the chains, which leaves us just the bridge controls.”

After Isadora’s explanation, Eru seemingly had recalled the perfect tool to carry out such an infiltration.

“I see... Then, I guess it is time for the Silhouette Gears to make their appearance.”

Isadora and Eleonora both nodded their heads, as they saw the similarity between this task and the mission where they were rescued from captivity.

“We are familiar with the land. The best approach would be to have the Silhouette Gears circle around the fortress and infiltrate through the forest at its rear. The main objective is to open the gate, then support our forces to sweep the fortress. As far as the personnel assigned...”

“Everyone is ready, please leave the mission to us.”

With the mission decided, Eru began to assemble the members. The commander of the Silhouette Gears was given to the familiar face of the Blue Hawk Knights, Nora Frykberg.

“Boss, how is Guyalarinde’s repair coming along?” Dietrich, who had been quietly listening, suddenly asked Boss.

“Oh? Sorry, there was no progress on the repairs. We were all busy with the

youngster's modifications of the Levitate Ship. That and, delegating the company commander's unit to be repaired by outside hands is hardly proper."

If it were just the Kardatolles, they would have no problem leaving the repairs to the Kuschepercan knightsmiths. However, the company commander's unit, especially the Guyalarinde, tend to have many quirks installed directly by Eru, and would be problematic if it were tampered by unfamiliar hands. As such, the repair had been set aside in favor of the Levitate Ship modifications, and didn't make it on time for the expedition.

"Since such is the case, I regrettably must ask you to borrow a Revantier for combat."

Seeing the distressed Boss, Dietrich seemingly was deep in thought.

"Then, Ernesti, is it alright for me to partake in the mission with the Silhouette Gears?" Dietrich asked after a moment of pause.

"Oh? You wish to volunteer?"

"I have at least some familiarity with the Silhouette Gear. Since Guyalarinde is still out of commission, I might as well put my skills to good use."

Hearing Dietrich's concise answer, Eru was now the one deep in thought. However, it didn't take long for him to bounce back, with a face full of anticipation.

"Great! Then let me borrow the second company for a while. I always wanted a force that I can freely move around!"

Hearing Eru's loud announcement, the members of the second company could not help but be anxious.

"What now? The young master is being even more whimsical than Di."

"Well, the young master always has been a whimsical one..."

"Haa... I guess we can't all jump in a Silhouette Gear, might as well see where the young master leads us."

After the storm of whispers passed, the second company seemed to have reached a consensus.

“We understand. We shall be under the young master’s command.”

“For some reason, I can’t help but be annoyed by how you all reached the consensus...” Dietrich let out a wry smile as the second company decided their direction.

With the plans settled, the Silver Phoenix Knights and the New Kuschepercan Army continued their march, closer and closer toward Silda Neljak.

Chapter 44: Assault, Siege of the Tetraspides Fortresses

In the Kingdom of Žaloudek's Central Kuscheperca Region, the Pan-Kusche highway connected the far end of the eastern region with the seat of the Viceroyalty – Delvincourt. Cutting across the Pan-Kusche highway was the Mulberry River, with its headwaters high up in the Aubigne Mountain Ranges. At the intersection of the two, the eastern fortress of the Tetraspides Fortresses stood.

The fortress was constructed on the banks of the river, and could easily repel any attackers with its daunting walls. As of late, the drawbridge that usually spanned the river was retracted to the walls, with its occupants seemingly on high alert.

To the east of the gatehouse were the vast Cauderlier Plains, where the open expanse was void of any cover – a perfect battleground for the highly mobile Silhouette Knights. After receiving the scout reports on the movement of the Kuschepercans, Žaloudekian forces could be seen in great numbers not only on the high walls of the Tetraspides Fortresses, but also on the Cauderlier Plains, visibly anxious for the upcoming battle. On the far end of the plains, the Kuschepercan army had long arrived and was forming up for the assault. As the two camps readied themselves for combat, the decisive battle for the gateway to the capital slowly unfolded.

Žaloudekians were in their usual battle-tested wall formation – an impenetrable black wall of countless Silhouette Knights, coloring the Cauderlier plains black with their shimmering armor. Opposite to Žaloudek, New Kuschepercan army was in the formation from their victorious battle of Missillier, with Resvant Vidos at its vanguard. Given their reliance on Silhouette Arms, having the tower knights at the front of the formation were indispensable.

Even with the black knights' overwhelming defense, they were still vulnerable to the long range bombardments of the tower knights. As such, Žaloudekian field army stood steadfast outside the range of the Kuschepercans, and the

immobile tower knights could not hope to immediately close the distance.

Just as the battle seemed to have devolved into a stalemate, a low rumbling sound was heard from overhead. As the air quivered, jet black Levitate Ships appeared through the dense clouds. The Levitate Ships' blow engines slowly revved up as it approached the Kuschepercan tower knights' formation.

"Levitate Ships! Enemy Levitate Ships sighted bearing south-southeast." At that moment, a Kuschepercan sentry alerted.

Immediately, a loud horn sounded within the Kuschepercan ranks, and the Resvant Vidos stirred to meet the newly arrived enemies.

"Vido units, enter anti-air formation! Do not let those Levitate Ships approach!"

While the Kuschepercan adjusted their formation, the Levitate Ships continued their relentless approach. Soon, the Žaloudekian fleet angled their ships just outside the range of Kuschepercan Silhouette Arms, and opened up their ports. From within, numerous catapults readied themselves and began to shower rocks upon the Kuschepercan army.

The Kuschepercan army swiftly prepared their defense. The tower knights launched a blanket of shots to blow apart the encroaching rocks. Accurately intercepting the rocks in midair was difficult for any unit. Therefore, the Kuschepercans relied on their sheer number of shots to overwhelm the attack. While many rocks were shot down, some did make it through and crashed into the Kuschepercan formation.

"Entering Silhouette Arms range! Anculosas, prepare for combat!" The commander of the fleet declared after hearing the report from the observers.

"Aye aye! Opening ether valves to lower ether concentration! Altitude decreasing for Silhouette Arms attack!"

As the Anculosas prepared their attack, the black ships slowly descended as they approached the Kuschepercan army. All of these ships had seen major reconstruction since the 'Siege of Missillier', with new platforms added on either side of the ship where a row of Silhouette Knights now stood. Each of the Silhouette Knights has a thick 'Bulwark Robe', with quadruple Silhouette Arms

protruding out from their backs. Designed by Horacio as a specialized Silhouette Arms unit, the Anculosa was a model akin to the tower knights.

The Anculosas turned their Silhouette Arms on the tower knights and unleashed a barrage of shots the moment the Kuschepercan army entered range. The Levitate Ships themselves soon began to circle at range of the Kuschepercan army, bombarding the Kuschepercan army from afar. Down on the surface, the tower knights valiantly stood their ground and counterattacked with shots. As the exchange intensified, the skies were soon covered in shots.

While the Kuschepercan army had superior numbers, they were set in relatively tight and immobile formations, making them a poor match against the highly mobile airborne Anculosas. The difference in accuracy soon became pronounced, and before long, the Kuschepercan army could no longer ignore the mounting casualties.

“We won’t last with the Vidos alone! It can’t be helped... move up the anti-air Revantiers!”

Messengers were quickly dispatched to the rear, and soon, Revantiers were brought up to their aid. The Revantiers were each carrying a massive shield with an armored port in the center, and on their backs was a javelin thrower that had replaced the sub-arms. The construct was the same to the Vertical Launch Javelin Systems used during the Battle of Missillier, with the Revantier model carrying the single launch equivalent. Compared to the Tzendrinbles of the Silver Phoenix Knights, who could operate multiple launchers through their training and skill in the newer models, the Kuschepercan army’s elites could only squeeze in enough training to accommodate just one launcher.

To differentiate these anti-air models from the mass-produced Revantier models, the Kuschepercans tentatively named them the ‘Javeliniers’.

“Javeliniers, prepare for attack! First volley, fire!!”

Under the orders of the company commander, the Javeliniers launched their wired javelins, and with streaks of red flame, headed straight for the Levitate Ships.

“Javelin launch detected! Port side Anculosas, intercept the javelins with ‘Lightning Whips’!” The observers loudly shouted into the communication

voicepipes.

Being able to change directions in flight and strike down Levitate Ships in a single blow, the javelins were a very threatening existence to the Žaloudekian air fleet. As such, even before the commander had issued an order, the Anculosas were fully ready to intercept the javelins. Their quadruple Silhouette Arms that were aiming at the Kuschepercan ground forces gave way to their two main arms, now pointed squarely at the approaching javelins. The javelins themselves continued to adjust and accelerate, until the silver nerves detached at their maximum length and the javelins continued on with their inertial force.

Immediately, a loud thunderous crackle was heard from the Levitate Ships, as the 'Lightning Whips' casted a bright light upon the approaching javelins. Unlike the usual flame magic, lightning magic has a relatively short range and abysmal accuracy. Yet, against the metallic javelins, there were no better choice as a counter, and the Žaloudekians once again demonstrated the incredible stopping power of their 'proximal defense'.

While the Lightning Whips proved to be able to strike down many of the javelins, some did end up penetrating their impeccable defense. The Kuschepercans had long identified the most efficient way of sinking a Levitate Ship – that is, to strike down the Etheric Levitator located at the heart of the ship. To protect the core of the Levitate Ships from harm, the Anculosas bravely stood in the way as meat shields, only to be impaled by the powerful javelins.

"Do not panic! Status report!"

"A few javelins got through from the port side! Structural damage minimal, but two Anculosas were severely damaged and now have compromised defenses!"

"Return fire with the catapults and pull our ships back! Let's pay those Javeliniers back for what they did to us!"

With one final return volley, the Levitate Ships withdrew before circling around and returning back into the fray with their fresh starboard battery.

As the aerial battle raged on, the black knights began their advance. The Kuschepercan tower knights were preoccupied with the Levitate Ships, so the black knights met little resistance in their march and quickly closed the distance

between the two armies. The black knights were a model that emphasized 'close quarter combat', and as long as they can close the distance, the immobile tower knights would be of little consequence.

Seeing the flood of black steel marching under the sporadic fire of the tower knights, the Levitate Ships also renewed their vigorous bombardment of the Kuschepercan army in order to divert attention away from the advance. Soon, the black knights set themselves upon the tower knights and crashed into the Kuschepercan vanguards. Faced with the onslaught, the Kuschepercan army began to waver.

"Darn it, have the Vidos withdraw!"

Not willing to let the Žaloudekians maintain their initiative, the Javeliniers withdrew the javelin launcher and advanced on the black knights. While the javelin was an incredible weapon, it was not designed for close quarters. Against the black knights, the javelin lacked the necessary distance to accelerate and the penetrative power to break through their heavy armor. As such, the modified Revantiers brought out their swords and entered combat against the black knights. Soon, the battlefield devolved into a chaotic melee.

Even after an hour, the battlefield remained in a state of chaos. Tyrantors and Revantiers were engaged in brutal combat, while Vidos tried their best to provide supporting fire. Up above, the Levitate Ships continued to probe for an opening while countering the numerous javelins launched from the surface to sink them. As clash of steel and the explosion of shots echoed across the battlefield, the sounds soon reached the core of the Kuschepercan army. At the battlefield headquarters, the King's Mount 'Kartoga Ol Cauchard Secundus' stood alongside her select Life Guards.

"I-is all these death unavoidable?"

"Ellie, you must stay strong. All of them are courageously fighting for the sake of our country and for you. Are you not here to bear witness to their noble sacrifices?"

Queen Eleonora clenched her fists as she listened to the sound. Even without seeing the battle herself, Eleonora could imagine the carnage her countrymen were enduring. At that moment, Eleonora could only feel her powerlessness at

guiding her countrymen to a more favorable outcome.

“T-that’s right. Could we not send in the Life Guards to assist?” Eleonora suddenly asked.

“Calm down, Ellie. We must not weaken your protection. If by chance you were targeted and taken out, our country will lose our pillar. I am sure you are painfully aware of what will happen to the country without its king...”

Upon hearing the convincing argument, Eleonora could not help but descend into silence. Isadora, on the other hand, was somewhat relieved that the Secundus had a two pilot system. If the Secundus only had the Queen herself, Eleonora would have long pushed forth to help her beleaguered countrymen, and others would have a hard time stopping her.

“...Although, if we keep this up, the prospect does look grim.”

Isadora forcibly calmed her anxiety. However, her worry would soon come to reality, as a certain object slowly crept toward the chaotic battlefield.



“...The wind is racing. It is getting stronger.”

Emrys, who was piloting Gordesleo that stood next to Secundus, was the first to notice the subtle noise through the loud clashes of the battlefield. Emry’s astute intuition led him to turn toward the distant sky. Soon, a low rumbling sound entered into the ears of the Kuschepercan forces and the Life Guards began to stir. It was a sound that everyone knew.

“So it has come... Guards, keep the Queen safe! Likely, it is here...”

Hearing Emrys’ warnings, the Guards created a protective cocoon around Secundus.

“Rys-nii! We...!”

“As agreed, just leave it to us. You stay safe.”

As Isadora anxiously reacted to the tense atmosphere, the sound continued to grow louder, and a black silhouette soon appeared on the distant horizon. At first glance, it seemed to be a Levitate Ship, but as it drew closer, the Kuschepercan soldiers were rendered speechless.

“T-that is... the Žaloudekian Flying Dragon! No wonder, the outer appearance definitely resembled dragonkin, truly an intimidating presence.”

The Dragon’s massive body seemingly eclipsed the sun, casting an ominous shadow with its outstretched wings.

The Flying Dragon was an otherworldly monster. Its sheer size alone dwarfs even the Žaloudekian Levitate Ships. With its crimson jaws and outstretched wings, it bore little resemblance to a ship, and could only aptly be described as a ‘monster’. Even the stalwart Emrys could not help but stir at the terrible sight before them.

“If the Intel holds, that bastard should have a powerful siege weapon in its arsenal. It would be over for us if we let it get into our ranks... Hmph... The situation had certainly turned troublesome...”

At the rear of the Kuschepercan formation stood the Queen. If the Flying Dragon Battleship, which appeared behind the Kuschepercan ranks, were to enter combat, the Queen would be one of its first targets.

“That’s why we are here. Third company, give the Flying Dragon a warm welcome~”



“Got it, young master!”

Emrys had long anticipated the Flying Dragon’s arrival, and as such, kept the Silver Phoenix Knights in reserve. With the order, Tzendrinbles fired up their

Vertical Launch Javelin System, the era's strongest anti-air weapon, at the prowling Dragon.

"Fire!" With one word, Helvi ordered the strike.

The javelins all launched in unison and accelerated rapidly toward the Flying Dragon. However, just before impact, the Flying Dragon Battleship had the Anculosas positioned on either side of the ship unleash its Lightning Whips to intercept.

"Lightning again? How predictable. With the sheer numbers of javelins we have launched, having one or two taken out is within expectations~"

"...Wait, something is different. That is more like a net! It seems the defense has improved since the last time we fought it!"

The javelins that even Silhouette Knights could not resist were effortlessly stopped by the net of lightning and blown to smithereens. Faced with the reality that the third company's full volley of javelins was unable to touch the Flying Dragon, the Kuschepercan army was awash with anxiety.

"...Fire the flare! The red one, now!" Emrys gave the order with a quivering voice.

The Lightning Whip of the Flying Dragon seemed to be of a different magnitude when compared to the usual Levitate Ship. If even the third company was unable to break through, then the Kuschepercan anti-air was meaningless on the Flying Dragon. As such, they had to summon the one person who could fight against that monstrosity.

"As expected of Collazo's reconstructed ship. Silly Kuschepercans, your feeble javelins are rendered impotent before the might of the Flying Dragon. Let the Demon God come, we shall strike it down along with the rest of the rabble!" At the helm, Doroteo revealed a confident smile.

During the repair of the Flying Dragon Battleship, Horacio personally supervised many upgrades to the craft that were deemed necessary to win over the Demon God, among which was the improved 'Lightning Curtain'. With the Flying Dragon now impervious to the anti-air javelins, the crew now confidently believed in their victory.

Doroteo scanned the chaotic battlefield and his eyes soon fell upon one particular point.

“That flag, that unit! Although I have heard the reports, I was still somewhat doubtful that the King’s Mount would appear. I can’t believe the ‘brat’ from back then would personally appear on the battlefield. I got to give it to her, she is showing more backbone than I would give her credit for~” Doroteo let out a sarcastic chuckle.

Doroteo had previously met Princess Eleonora at Lacepede castle, and his impression of her was a porcelain doll that would break at the slightest touch. Therefore, he was rather surprised that the same girl would lead a campaign the moment she became Queen. Deep down in Doroteo’s heart, doubt remained that the King’s Mount before him was just a body double, but soon shook the thought away.

“It matters little if the King’s Mount contained the real princess, as long as we just burn it all. Conversely speaking, we should instead be mindful of the missing Demon God. I am certain the Demon God is just waiting for the opportunity to strike, so we need to remain cautious...”

After a moment of thought, Doroteo made his decision and ordered the jaws of the Flying Dragon to open, revealing the unparalleled siege weapon.

“I have no reason to let this opportunity slip. Prepare ‘Dragonbreath’ and strike down those who dared to oppose Her Excellency, Princess Catalina! Burn them all to ash!”

Powerful magic began to stir in the mouth of the Dragon, and with the magic seals, soon erupted into flame. Before everyone’s eyes, the Kuschepercan army was about to be scorched along with the very earth they stood on.

However, moments before the Dragonbreath was unleashed upon the Kuschepercans, a streak of red light rose up from the surface. Along with the signal, a new Levitate Ship appeared on the battlefield.

“Huh? Who is in command of that Levitate Ship? I have not sent out any orders for the Jade Dragon Company’s Levitate Ship to assist... Wait, something about that ship-...”

The ship did not come from the same direction as the Jade Dragon Knights' camp. Looking at the approaching Levitate Ship, Doroteo could not shake off a nudging feeling, as if something was amiss.

Doroteo soon realized the reason for his unease. The Levitate Ship lacked 'sails', and was bellowing fire as it flew.

"...No, that's not one of ours! It is the enemy! This means-...!"

Doroteo knew that among Žaloudekian Levitate Ships, the only ship that relied on flame propulsion was the Flying Dragon Battleship alone. The standard Levitate Ships simply did not have enough mana to maintain such a propulsion mechanism. As such, only the originators of the technology, Doroteo's sworn enemy, could fathom a method to make the mechanism viable.

"So you have come, Demon God! How dare you hold one of our glorious Levitate Ships captive, you bastard!"

As the Silver Phoenix Knight's Levitate Ship continued to advance, Ikaruga stood at the bow of the ship, glaring at the Flying Dragon Battleship in the distant.

"Hahaha! Behold my 'Levitate Knight Mk. IV, Modified Aerial Assault Levitate Ship'!" Eru loudly declared while piloting Ikaruga, "Ah, the name is a bit too long... Let's shorten it to 'Aerial Assault Ship'! Flying Dragon, I have the best welcome prepared for you! I won't let you get away this time, and will wholeheartedly 'gobble' you up~ Aerial Assault Ship, charge!!"

The foundation of the Aerial Assault Ship was Cristóbal's Levitate Ship. If Doroteo were to know such a fact, he would certainly be fuming in rage. In a way, it was to Doroteo's fortune to be oblivious of this fact.

Ever since the ship fell into the Silver Phoenix Knights' hands after the Battle of Missillier, the knightsmiths had performed a complete analysis of its functions and capabilities, and then had the ship fully modified for the battle against the Flying Dragon.

The outer appearance of the ship had seen much change. The sails were completely removed and new armor plating was copiously added to the bow. In particular, the propulsion method was changed to accommodate the large

rocket engines in the rear. While not as powerful as the ones mounted on the Flying Dragon, the new engines were adequate for a Levitate Ship of its size and were able to match the Flying Dragon in speed.

With a massive burst of flames, the Aerial Assault Ship accelerated toward the Flying Dragon.

“Demon God, coming at me with your ship in tow? Perfect! Let us end this once and for all! Don’t think your Levitate Ship will stand a chance against my Flying Dragon just because it has flame propulsion! Signaler, inform the Jade Dragon Knights that I will leave ground support to them!”

The Flying Dragon Battleship had light magic apparatus installed for ship to ship communication. With different choice of color, it provided for commands to be sent over long distances. With the order received, two new Levitate Ships appeared from the rear.

Compared to the traditional Levitate Ships, the two new ships had increased armor for protection and was a model specifically designed to accommodate Silhouette Knights. The new arrivals, termed the ‘Amphibious Assault Ships’ by their knighthsmiths, soon entered into the fray.

From openings within their thick armor, barrage of shots rained down upon the Kuschepercan forces. At the same time, a loud chain grinded as the bottom cargo door opened, where Silhouette Knights began to drop onto the ground one after another. Although the Žaloudekian strike force was few in numbers, they were able to land next to the Kuschepercan headquarters, as if bringing a dagger to the throat of Kuscheperca.

With the terrible Flying Dragon circling overhead, and the sudden appearance of an enemy to their rear, the Kuschepercan army could not help but waver.

“Guards, do not fear! We only need to keep them from reaching our Queen! Stop them and calmly strike them down!”

Emrys tried to rally the Life Guards stationed at the headquarters. While they had plenty of experienced veterans in the form of the lesser nobility, the Kuschepercans lacked a strong figure to command the battle. As such, despite being part of the volunteer force, Emrys naturally took on the position of commander with his exceptional martial skill and the blood of royalty.

“Inform the vanguards to not worry about the headquarters. The Flying Dragon overhead will be felled by the Demon God in due time, and the Queen’s defense could be left to us. If anything, the enemy had already revealed all their cards, and we only need to respond in kind to seize victory!”

Although Emrys had little basis for his confident declarations, his stalwart demeanor gave his statements a strange air of authenticity. Regardless of the circumstances, the commander must stand strong. As such, Emrys maintained a collected appearance to calm his anxious soldiers in an act worthy to be called a descendent of the Lion King Ambrosius, and soon, the wavering soldiers rallied themselves to combat.

On the chaotic front lines, the Kuschepercan vanguard reformed themselves into a wedge, seemingly prepared to smash through the line of black knights and bisecting the enemy army in two. Standing amid the vanguard, Baron Mazquiarán looked up at the sky.

“The Silver Phoenix Knights are courageously fighting with that Flying Dragon! I am certain they will avenge our fallen brethren, so we must do our part! Comrades, do not fear! As long as we advance, we will certainly carve a path to the Tetraspides Fortresses!!” He loudly proclaimed.

Despite the difficulties that lay before them and the old capital they had hoped to reclaim still far away, the Kuschepercan army’s morale was high.

Opposite the Kuschepercans, the Žaloudekians also experienced a surge of morale. With the Flying Dragon Battleship ‘Vouivre’ overhead and the strong walls of Tetraspides Fortresses behind, the intoxicating nectar of victory was right before them.

“Glorious black knights! Our guardian dragon has descended upon the battlefield, and it is only a matter of time before the sky itself submits to its might! Let the Kuschepercan rebels perish in its flames! Hold strong, glorious knights, and claim the victory before your eyes!”

With a loud roar, the Žaloudekians raised their thick shield and braced for the incoming Kuschepercan assault.

“Young master, what should we do? Is it about time we commit to the attack?” Knight Runners of the second company asked Emrys, as they observed

the vanguard's changing formations.

At their suggestion, Emrys surveyed the current progression of the battle. The front has once again returned to a stalemate as the Kuschepercan pulled back to their new formation and steadily held their ground. Fortuitously, despite the sudden arrival of the Flying Dragon and the airborne reinforcements, the Kuschepercan army's morale stabilized with Ikaruga's rapid response and their troops were holding strong against the black knights. The situation seemed to favor the Kuschepercans, at least *for now*.

"...No, we must not act hastily while the drawbridge is still up. Let us hold off an all-out assault until our allies have secured the objective."

No matter how close they were able to approach the Tetraspides Fortresses, they would not be able to take the fortress as long as the drawbridge remained in Žaloudekian hands. Therefore, the assault would have to wait until they had successfully seized the drawbridge.

"Young master seems to be quite different from Di~"

"Either way, let us hold onto our forces in reserve for now, and wait for the big push at the end."

"Even if we managed to survive through the plains, we will still need to assault the fortress. Who knows how many enemies lie within..."

"Don't be discouraged. The more enemy the better for our eventual rampage through their ranks!"

If the drawbridge could not be seized soon, then the New Kuschepercan forces would sink into the quagmire of war. They had no reserves to tap, and if the battle devolves into a war of attrition, the first to strike their colors would be the Kuschepercans.

"That wall is becoming increasingly worrisome. I wonder if we have received any word from the infiltration team..." Emrys stared attentively at the distant fortress, which, despite his apparent calm, was eating away at him inside.



As the ground forces engaged in melee, the aerial battle also continued to

develop.

Žaloudekian air fleet of Jade Dragon Knights and Steel Winged Knights, commanding the sky with their greater numbers, encircled the battered Kuschepercan land forces. At the center of the encirclement was a single ship with Kuschepercan colors, the Aerial Assault Ship.

With the Demon God at its bow, the Aerial Assault Ship accelerated straight at the jewel of the Žaloudekian fleet – the Flying Dragon Battleship. It was not unusual for the Aerial Assault Ship to eclipse the standard Žaloudekian Levitate Ships in speed, since it relied on rocket propulsion, for which the inferior wind propulsion could not hope to compare.

“...Its speed could easily match my Flying Dragon. If they keep accelerating like this, perhaps they intend to ram the Flying Dragon with that reinforced bow of theirs...” Doroteo carefully analyzed the approaching Aerial Assault Ship and noticed the reinforced plating at the bow. It was not hard for Doroteo to figure out its intended use. “...Although, if the Demon God is involved, I am certain there is more to that reinforced bow than meets the eye.”

Doroteo could not imagine something like the Demon God, who commanded the most advanced technology of its time, to waste its only Levitate Ship on a suicidal attack.

However, as the Aerial Assault Ship did not veer from its collision course, Doroteo decided to probe the Ship’s intentions. The Flying Dragon Battleship opened fire on the Aerial Assault Ship with its contingent of Anculosas. The countless shots pelleted the Aerial Assault Ship like a swarm of angry wasps, and forced the Ship to change course.

However, either because of the long distance or the Aerial Assault Ship’s incredible speed, few shots were able to find their mark.

“Increase the magic barrage, and bring us closer!” Doroteo barked.

As the Aerial Assault Ship approached the Flying Dragon from its side, Doroteo ordered his ship to advance. The two ships began to spiral inward with their broadsides facing each other, and as the distance between the two ships drew closer, the Anculosas’ shots were able to find their mark more often.

“...How is that, Demon God? At this pace, you shall perish under my barrage!”

At the end, seemingly unable to resist the barrage any longer, the Aerial Assault Ship turned tail and cruised away from the Flying Dragon.

“Could they have thought that they would stand a chance if they had a Levitate Ship of their own, but failed to accommodate for the necessary crew to master the ship? How laughable! I won’t let this opportunity slip away! Prepare the Lightning Curtain at maximum power, and set the Dragon to ramming speed! Let us smash that Levitate Ship of theirs along with the Demon God inside!”

The Anculosas onboard activated their enhanced ‘Lightning Whip’, and encased the Flying Dragon with a powerful defensive cocoon. As the Flying Dragon glowed from the lightning, its speed picked up and rammed straight at the Aerial Assault Ship.

With the Flying Dragon’s maximum output, the distance between the two quickly shortened, but not before the two ships cruised far from the battlefield.

At the bow of the Aerial Assault Ship, Ikaruga’s head stirred as the crystal ‘eye’ focused on the Flying Dragon, and confirmed it has followed them away from the battlefield.

“...I have been waiting for this!” Eru revealed a devious smile, “After all, we cannot afford to activate my new weapon above allies, but it is a completely different story here...”

As the ‘wings’ extended from its flanks, the Aerial Assault Ship rapidly slowed down.

“Come, Flying Dragon. It is the time of your reckoning. With how long you had ruled the skies, you probably did not think my armored ship would be a challenge... but that overconfidence will be the end of you! I will teach you what happens when you get close to my reconstructed Aerial Assault Ship!”

Ikaruga’s two massive Ether Reactors began to hum as a surge of energy was produced. However, his Ikaruga did not stir at all, and seemed to be in a state of hibernation. Behind the hibernating Ikaruga, countless silver nerves connected its back to the interior of the Levitate Ship. It seemed Eru had no intention of

meeting the Flying Dragon with his Ikaruga, and the mana was being diverted elsewhere.

“Awaken, ‘Multiple Launch Javelin System’!”

Eru’s computations were transmitted along with the massive surge of mana to every corner of the ship. Then, as if the entire ship was awakening from a long slumber, the outer shell of the ship shifted and hidden Vertical Launch Javelin Systems began to sprout upon the surface. The tightly packed javelin throwers soon covered the entire top deck like a porcupine, with a total count of a hundred and twenty-eight throwers.

Ernesti Echevalier demonstrated his greatest genius – his sheer computational ability that provided the expertise necessary to command the capricious Ikaruga. It was not far from the truth to say that his insane strength was all thanks to his unparalleled skill in computation. This javelin storm was the product of his full potential, and was the secretive trump card he had installed on the Aerial Assault Ship.

“Come... Our battle ‘sacrificial ritual’ has begun. Time to let slip the dogs of war!”

The scene where all one hundred and twenty-eight launchers firing in unison was awe-inspiring. The burst of flame that propelled the launchers almost seemed to consume the top deck, as the air atop the ship groaned and crackled from the heat. Like the branches of a magnificent willow reaching into the heavens, the javelins continued to rise before curving toward the Flying Dragon Battleship.

Before this sight, even the steadfast Doroteo was rendered speechless. As if sensing Doroteo’s momentary shock, the countless javelins let out a burst of flame as they accelerated toward their target.

“H-how... ridiculous! But... naïve! You are too naïve, Demon God! You think just by adding a few more javelins, you would be able to break through my perfect defense? All hands, erase those encroaching javelins from my sight! ‘Lightning Curtain’, activate!!”

Facing Demon God’s javelins, the Flying Dragon have its impenetrable ‘Lightning Curtain’. The Anculosas tapped into the energy of the Flying Dragon

and activated their greatest defensive weapon to resist the torrent of javelins. A net of lightning rapidly covered the Flying Dragon, and all the javelins that made contact were blown to smithereens and seemingly rendered harmless.

“Futile! As long as we have the ‘Lightning Curtain’, mere javelins are harmless to us!”

Doroteo, who was sitting at the helm, failed to notice the subtle change and continued to laugh. However, for the Knight Runners of the Anculosas standing out on the deck, the situation was clearly abnormal.

The debris of the destroyed javelins, which should have been made from metal and magic catalysts, seemed to also contain sawdust and a sparkling ‘liquid’. These unusual debris continued to rain down on the Flying Dragon. At first, the Knight Runners were perplexed by the strange liquid. However, as the smell of the liquid drifted into their nose, they all turned deadly pale.

“T-this is... ‘oil’?!”

By the time the Žaloudekians had noticed, it was already too late and the liquid had completely drenched the Flying Dragon. At that moment, a small flash from the Aerial Assault Ship caught their eyes. It was a single crimson shot of flame fired straight at them.

“...! ...Ah?!”

They did not have any time to respond to the sudden coup. On contact with the airborne droplets, the crimson shot ignited the liquid and the flame soon reached the doused ship. Spreading rapidly from the bow to the rear, the flame consumed the entire Flying Dragon in a blinding fireball.

The structure of the ship warped and creaked from the intense heat, as if the Dragon itself was wreathing in pain. The once prideful visage that had dominated the sky sunk slightly from the shockwave before the Etheric Levitator fought against gravity to push the behemoth back into the air.

The deafening explosion and the tremors from the shockwave were the strongest at the helm. Doroteo was momentarily stunned, but thanks to his experience, was soon able to recover.

“R-report! What has happened?! Where is all this flame coming from?! All

stations, report now! Anyone!” Doroteo loudly barked into the voicepipes.

However, all that greeted him was silence.

Staring at the brilliant fireball in the sky, Ikaruga slowly stood up from within the Aerial Assault Ship. The numerous silver nerves detached in unison from its back as Ikaruga rearmed itself with its weapons. Eru’s passion permeated the Demon God as its Ether Engines revved up, pouring immense energy into its every fiber.

“I knew full well you would respond with lightning. With the assumption that the lightning defense was certain to be rid of its flaws, the number of javelin should matter little. However, therein lay the trap. By preparing javelins with the full intention of being intercepted, I was able to create the perfect weapon against the Flying Dragon.”

The javelins launched by the Aerial Assault Ship were different from the standard anti-air javelins. It was specifically made with a hollow wooden center filled with ‘Magic Beast Oil’, a highly flammable substance.

In the previous encounter, Eru had learned of the Flying Dragon’s ‘Lightning Whip’, and soon came up with the decoy javelins. The plan was to have the javelins purposely intercepted and have its flammable liquid rain down upon the target.

“Did you enjoy it? The ‘magic missiles’ specifically designed for our date today~ With that opening spark to light the way, let us enjoy our battle to its fullest!”

As the surface of the Aerial Assault Ship returned to its original state, Ikaruga flew out from the bow with its boosters spewing out flames, and dived straight toward the burning Flying Dragon Battleship.

“H-how dare you, detestable Demon God, to commit such a heinous act against my beloved Flying Dragon and subordinates! Absolutely unforgivable!!” Doroteo no longer had an ounce of his usual cool as he let rage consumed him.

Certainly, Doroteo was mentally prepared for the attack, as he had always assumed the Demon God would have a trick up its sleeves. However, the reality was shocking to almost a maddening degree, and even Doroteo could not have

imagined that the hail of javelins was but a cog to the sinister plan.

“H-how dare you use fire! Fire belongs to the Flying Dragon! Your ember shall not harm the mighty Dragon!”

The Flying Dragon remain consumed by the flames as the Magic Beast Oil, living up to its name as being hard to extinguish, continued to burn away its surface. At that moment, Doroteo had completely lost his reasons. He could not accept that the rightful power of the Dragon was usurped by a pretender, and continued his unabashed verbal assault.

The Flying Dragon Battleship started to creak loudly – not of the damage, but of the flexing of its crystal strands. With a sudden and daring twirl of its massive body, the Flying Dragon was able to use the centrifugal force to fling off the burning oil on its surface, and successfully cleansed its body of flames. However, the first words Doroteo heard were the pained cries of his subordinates.

“C-commander, are you alright?! The earlier twirl was able to shed the burning oil... but most of our Anculosas... are now inoperable.”

The officer’s report jolted Doroteo back from his rage. The explosion and shockwave had severely damaged the Anculosas stationed at the head of the Dragon. Of the six Anculosas, five were completely incapacitated.

“C-commander... the situation is terrible. At this rate, the m-mana supply will...”

Doroteo knew the fatal problem even without the officer pointing it out.

The unrivalled power of the Flying Dragon Battleship was built upon its enormous mana expenditure, which was barely held in check with thirteen Ether Reactors running in parallel. If they had lost five of those thirteen reactors, it won’t take long before the Flying Dragon run out of mana.

“...No. It is not over! I am certain of it!” Doroteo shouted as his bloodshot eyes stared attentively at the last card in his hand.

It was the ‘Dragonblood Reactor’ built by Horacio Collazo and represented the pinnacle of Žaloudekian Ethelite technology. According to Horacio, it was a gluttonous reactor that could not be satiated even with all the Ethelite they

have.

“The damage is severe, but as long as we maintain the mana supply, the Flying Dragon should still be able to fight. That’s right, I doubt the Demon God could repeat that attack again.” Doroteo excitedly thought to himself as he extinguished his broiling rage.

In his calm, Doroteo was able to identify a fatal flaw to the Aerial Assault Ship’s earlier attack. Unlike magic shot, javelin was a physical weapon. As such, for them to repeat the earlier attack, they would need to have a stockpile of Javelins in order to replace the ones used. From the small size of the Levitate Ship, Doroteo could easily deduce that the ship would have no way of carrying that large a stockpile on board.

“The Goddess of Victory had not abandoned us. As long as we... activate the Dragonblood Reactor...”

In his fervor, he could not shake off a terrible premonition. If he activated the Dragonblood Reactor, it would quickly consume the entire remaining Etherlite stockpile, the fuel necessary to keep the Flying Dragon afloat. As such, he would no longer have the fuel margin to escape to the upper atmosphere. His only path would be to defeat the Demon God and the Kuschepercan army or face destruction – *vincere nel mori*.

As he simmered over the difficult decision, time was rapidly running out. At that moment, an event that happened on the battlefield below dispelled all his uncertainty.

Chapter 45: Nemesis

As the battle on the Cauderlier plains devolved into a stalemate, Kuschepercan Silhouette Gears circled around to the banks of the Mulberry River downstream of the Tetraspides Fortresses.

While it was difficult to evade detection during the crossing if they had large Silhouette Knights, the group was armed with Silhouette Gears that were much more discrete and portable. The group only had to move the Silhouette Gears onto makeshift rafts to covertly ferry them across the river. After everyone reached the steep embankments on the other side, they hid the rafts in the lush forests that now surrounded them, and rearmed themselves in their Silhouette Gears.

“We are only able to move this freely in only Silhouette Gears because of the lack of magic beasts.” Dietrich muttered.

“Agreed. If we do something like this back in Fremmevira, the risk would be quite severe.” Nora responded.

Within the Kingdom of Fremmevira, a squad of Silhouette Gear would face considerable, although not necessarily life-threatening, danger if it were to operate alone.

With everyone fully prepared, the Silhouette Gears ventured into the thickets. The terrain was incredibly rough, and would be difficult to traverse if it weren't for the enhanced mobility of the Silhouette Gears. Moreover, the group was able to cover much distance without rest given the endurance of the Silhouette Gears. After traveling for a while, Nora called for the group to come to a stop.

“...We are near the fortress. Stay alert for any Žaloudek sentries and watch your steps.”

From that point on, they slowed their pace and silently crept along the undergrowth. Soon, they departed from the forest, and found themselves on a large clearing.

“What should we do now? Advance quickly and eliminate any patrols we

encounter?”

Hearing Dietrich’s question, Nora simply shook her head.

“No. We have detailed Intel on the layout of the region. There is a route that will allow us minimal risk.” Nora led the group to a tunnel tucked away in the shrubbery.

At a glance, the tunnel seemed natural, without any locks or camouflage, and blended seamlessly with the surroundings. Unless one was informed of the entrance beforehand, one was certain to miss it.

As the Silhouette Gears entered into the tunnel with magic lamps in hand, the natural rock and mud formation soon gave way to artificially carved walls.

“Is this a secret passage? Certainly fitting for our covert infiltration. However, while it is wide enough to allow Silhouette Gears through, isn’t this a bit too snug a fit?” Dietrich grumbled as he walked.

Perhaps it was done to make the secret tunnel as discrete as possible, but the space within was very small and barely allowed the passage of Silhouette Gears.

“It would be problematic if we encounter any enemies here.”

“Shush! Quiet down!”

A quiet but sharp whisper that came from the front of the column made Dietrich reflexively close his mouth. The sound tended to echo in the tight space, and while it was unlikely for the sound to reach outside the tunnel, minimal precautions should be taken.

At Nora’s order, the group continued in silence. As a knight runner of the Kingdom of Fremmevira, Dietrich has been trained to remain steadfast on any mission. However, the constant anxiety and danger of the infiltration mission were really testing his limits. Comparatively, the Blue Hawk Knights continued to carry themselves in a calm and collected manner, for which Dietrich could not help but be impressed. Soon, the group arrived at a ladder.

“Finally, we can say goodbye to the tight spaces.”

“I will be opening the final switch. Everyone, stay alert!”

The group extinguished their lamps as Nora worked on the switch in the

darkness. After a few clicks and clacks, the exit slowly grinded open.

The Silhouette Gears 'Shadowlad' lived up to their reputations, and stealthily made their way into what seemed to be a storage room. With this step, they had successfully infiltrated the Tetraspides Fortress.

After the entire group left the tunnels, Nora took out a new map – a detailed layout of the Tetraspides Fortresses. Understandably, as the important gateway to Delvincourt, no maps of the facilities were created. As such, the map in Nora's hand was painstakingly made through the memory of the royalty, and despite being woefully incomplete, was still better than nothing.

"Our next target is the drawbridge controls, but we must first confirm the powertrain is engaged."

Unsurprisingly, the large drawbridge, strong enough to allow Silhouette Knights to march across, was extremely heavy. Even Silhouette Knights were unable to easily lift the behemoth of a structure. Therefore, much of the drawbridge operations required the waterwheel attached to a powertrain to function.

"This is where the passage left us, and here is where the powertrain is located. While the enemy is focused on our troops out on the plains, we must remain vigilant. We will act according to the predetermined plan... does everyone know their task when we reach the room?"

Every member of the Blue Hawk Knights has long memorized their tasks, and would be able to devote themselves to their objectives the moment they reached their target.

"...Alright, to victory!"

After final confirmations, the Silhouette Gears began their operation.

With Tetraspides Fortresses' impregnable outer fortifications and walls, the architects did not hold a great interest on internal defenses. Combined with the ongoing battle outside, gaps within the internal defenses were aplenty. As such, the highly mobile but stealthy Silhouette Gears swiftly moved through the Žaloudekian patrols with minimal resistance.

Within the Tetraspides Fortress, the reserve black knights were anxious for

the possible sortie onto the Cauderlier plains. Both the knight runners and the knight smiths were busy making final preparations for combat, leaving little notice for the group of enemy that had infiltrated their base.

“The powertrain room should be ahead...”

While Nora’s group did not encounter any enemies on their way, they continued to remain vigilant and moved carefully through the corridors. Soon, they arrived in a large hall bordering the powertrain room.

“Hahaha... I knew you would come.”

The Silhouette Gears were met with an enemy force that stood in their way to the powertrain room. At the center of the guards stood Kerhild Hietakangas, commander of the Copper Fang Knights, and understandably, the ones behind her were members of the Knights.

“Hahaha... I was deprived of my subordinates and of my Silhouette Knights, and then forcibly delegated to a mere support role. Your arrival is truly a blessing!” She revealed a terrifying smile.

The Copper Fang Knights once launched a night raid against the Kuschepercans in Missillier, but the raid gravely backfired and the knights were almost wiped out. Because of the failure, the Copper Fang Knights were forced to take responsibility, and were relegated to a mere footnote in the Žaloudek Army.

“The drawbridge would be difficult to assault frontally. Therefore, I was certain a more covert approach was planned. As expected, those miniature Silhouette Knights really did come!” Kerhild could not help but smile at her perfect prediction, “It didn’t matter how the enemy infiltrated the fortress. As long as we know their objective, a defense could easily be set up. We had been waiting a long time for your arrival!”

At her beckon, the Copper Fang Knights raised their crossbows and staff weapons at Nora’s group. No matter how agile the Silhouette Gear may be, it would have a hard time evading the hail of bolts. As such, Nora and the other Blue Hawk Knights prepared themselves mentally for a forlorn charge.

“...Let us serve as your shield, and go finish the mission in our stead.” Nora

calmly said to the flustered Dietrich.

“Ugh... Even with Silhouette Gears, going up against that many enemies is suicide.”

“That is part of our job.”

With that said, Nora leapt into action. Against the rain of arrows, Nora and the others had nowhere to run, and the meager armor of the Shadowlads were slowly chipped away.

“Your courage is praiseworthy, but you should just leave the fighting to me!”

Dietrich pulled out a large sword from his Shadowlad, and charged into the fray. Using his speed, he quickly eclipsed Nora and the others, charging straight into the hail of arrows. However, Dietrich did not move to dodge, but with a swing of his sword, cut the arrows down. When all the arrows were fired, Dietrich stood unharmed between the two belligerents.

Knight runners were not simply pilots of Silhouette Knights. Given the similarity between Silhouette Knights and the human body, strong knight runners were undoubtedly powerful martial artists.

As the commander of the Silver Phoenix Knights’ second company – the self-proclaimed ‘Assault Company’, Dietrich Cunitz was unmatched in his offensive power. Even if he was against arrows and bolts, Dietrich was still able to effortlessly cut them all down.

“Let us switch our tasks. I am better at using the sword, and you are more dexterous than me. So I will leave the drawbridge to you, just be sure to provide a few men to assist me.” Dietrich flashed a confident smile.

Certainly, the Blue Hawk Knights were not shy in combat, but most of their training was geared toward covert operations. As such, when compared to regular knight runners, they were a bit lacking in combat expertise.

“How willful could you be...? In a way, you are surprisingly similar to the Knights Commander. However, I agree with your assessment. It seemed the combat here is better suited to your expertise. I wish you luck!”



About half of the knights followed Nora. With the receding footsteps, Dietrich cut down the second volley of arrows, seemingly in a particular good mood.

“Come, I was getting annoyed with all the sneaking around! Time for some

rampage, prepare yourselves!”

Before Dietrich finished his sentence, he had already leapt toward the Copper Fang Knights. The knights barely had the time to reload their crossbows, and could only try to delay Dietrich with sporadic blasts from their staff weapons. However, Dietrich was not fazed by the attack, and calmly blocked the shots with his sword.

With a sudden swing near his foot, Dietrich tossed up a large piece of rock, before having the Silhouette Gear’s powerful kick propel the shattered pebbles at the Copper Fang Knights. The power behind the attack was immense, and crashed into the ranks, inflicting heavy casualties.

“Huh?! This bast-...? Oh no!”

Dietrich swiftly pressed his advantage against the wavering enemy and began to cut indiscriminately in his Silhouette Gear. Before long, all of the enemies were vanquished.

“All done. Now that our gig is up, let us go on a rampage in the fortress. If anything, it would help to take some attention off Nora’s group!”

As such, with the intention of providing cover for the drawbridge group, Dietrich and his group began to unleash fury within the fortress.

On the other hand, Copper Fang Knights’ greedy decision to claim the credit for the defense for themselves backfired. The entire interception was planned without the knowledge of the garrison commanders, and understandably, the rest of the garrison was uninformed of the infiltration. The startled garrison was unable to respond to the sudden attack, and was easily beaten down by Dietrich’s group. Moreover, the interior of the fortress were primarily designed for the knight runners and the foot soldiers. As such, Silhouette Knights could not hope to join in the defense.

Against the sudden assault by the superhuman Silhouette Gears, the entire fortress soon descended into chaos.

“...Their distraction seemed to be working.”

After confirming the powertrain, Nora and her group safely arrived at the drawbridge controls. Even with the chaos, the drawbridge room remained well

guarded, which spoke to its importance. Therefore, Nora's group first had to subdue the guards before they could reach their objective.

"The army is still waiting for us, let us hurry."

With that said, Nora released the drawbridge mechanism.

"B-bastard! Must you get in my way every time?!" Kerhild could not stop cursing as she wandered the corridors.

With Dietrich's overwhelming attack, Kerhild was quick to abandon her subordinates. The repeated loss has made Kerhild hardened toward her subordinates, and now only saw them as disposable pawns.

For Kerhild, the chance to regain her formal glory was infinitesimal, especially now the Copper Fang Knights was left only with her. However, despite the setbacks, Kerhild continued to hold a determined gaze.

"Even if there is only the slightest chance... I will seize it with my own two hands!" With that said, Kerhild dashed to the smithy.



The eastern stronghold of the Tetraspides Fortresses – the final defense of Delvincourt resting on the banks of the Mulberry – made a low grinding sound as the drawbridge mechanism began to churn.

The Kuschepercan Army's morale rapidly rose at the sight, and regained a new vigor in their advance. For the Kuschepercans, the final obstacle to their liberation has been removed, and victory was within reach.

Having recently shed off the flames, Doroteo was flabbergasted aboard the Flying Dragon Battleship.

"Fools! Why would they lower the drawbridge?! If they do that, the rebels will march right in! What is the garrison doing?!" As Doroteo cursed, he recalled a certain night raid from before, "I see... It is those miniature Silhouette Knights! They are up to their old tricks again!"

Žaloudekians had learned much from their previous defeats at the hands of the Kuschepercans, and had made ample preparations to the changing technological landscape. However, due to their preoccupation with the security

and strength of their Levitate Ships, they overlooked the possible infiltration by Silhouette Gears. Doroteo had no way to know that the Copper Fang Knights did anticipate the attack, but such an achievement was moot with Kerhild's poor attempt to monopolize the victory.

With the damage to the Flying Dragon, and the sudden coup within the fortress, Doroteo needed to make an immediate decision before the situation became irreversible. As such, Doroteo overcame his own reservations and decided to activate the 'sealed reactor'. With the voicepipes, Doroteo declared his intention to the surviving crew.

"...Vincere nel mori, activate the Dragonblood Reactor."

With the order given, the Flying Dragon cut off its own retreat and was committed to the battle.

Doroteo have always steeled himself for death in combat, but he had been reluctant to make his subordinates follow him to his end. However, with the recent development, Doroteo had to commit or shoulder the certain defeat of the Žaloudekian army on his conscious.

"With this, we shall win or we shall perish! I hope all hands will fulfill their duty to the utmost! For victory!"

A low hum came from the interior of the Flying Dragon as the channels were open up one by one. The Ether Supplier hungrily consumed the Ethelite as it spew out massive concentrations of Ether, fueling the activated Dragonblood Reactor and the surviving Anculosas.

"Ethelite reaching critical mass and fission has started! Concentrated ether diverted to reactor! Dragonblood Reactor is now at maximum capacity!"

With the constant injection of concentrated ether, an unfamiliar noise echoed within the vessel as the Dragonblood Reactor powered up. At the same time, all the remaining Ether Reactors also began to run in overdrive.

'Maximize'. It was a term used to describe the activation of the Dragonblood Reactor, which was coupled with the rapid consumption of the ship's Ethelite stock. With the increased mana output, the already powerful Flying Dragon Battleship would be able to exceed all its prior operational limits.

“Perhaps, even if we do win this battle, the Flying Dragon will likely not last.”

On the other hand, the Dragonblood Reactor was a double edged sword. Ether Reactors were originally designed by the people living on the ground for the sparse atmospheric Ether available on the ground, and could not be chronically exposed to concentrated ether. In prior experiments at the Žaloudek Atelier, excessive exposure to concentrated ether from the Ether Supplier quickly led to the deterioration of the Ether Reactor, ultimately resulting in the reactor’s ‘death’. The Žaloudekian knightsmiths tried everything to fix the dead reactor, but all efforts were moot.

As such, even with the Dragonblood Reactor, the same problem remained for the Flying Dragon Battleship. At the cost of time, the Flying Dragon was able to gain immense strength. Yet, the only fate that awaited it was certain death.

With a low and terrifying rumbling, Doroteo was able to palpitate the surge of strength from his controls.

“Ugh, the ‘Maximized’ Flying Dragon is incredibly willful... As expected, even I could not completely control it...”

With the sudden burst of mana, the Flying Dragon acted almost with a mind of its own, beyond the command of any human. Even the slightest twitch came with incredible power. As if a wild beast, the Flying Dragon would not even submit to the battle-hardened Doroteo.

“Do not force the controls! Just charge directly at the enemy and cut them down!”

Doroteo gave up on mastering the Flying Dragon, and simply channeled the unwieldy power toward his closest enemy and nemesis – the Demon God. He knew that unless he relied on the Dragonblood Reactor, they would not be able to overcome the Demon God.

“C-commander! The Demon God has left the Levitate Ship, and is heading directly for us!”

“So it has come... Perfect! We won’t last long, so let us greet the Demon God with our entire arsenal and take it out with one fell swoop!”

The Etheric Levitator had a very peculiar mechanism of action. As long as no

outside force acts upon the object, it could remain indefinitely at the predetermined height without power. As such, despite the Flying Dragon's severe injuries, it remained serenely afloat.

"Now, start the Lightning Curtain!"

At that moment, they had no path of retreat, so the Flying Dragon and the whole crew aboard were fully resolved in their fight against the Demon God.



Winding back to the moment when the massive fireball appeared in the sky, when the miniature sun shone brightly as it consumed the Flying Dragon.

The two armies on the ground were mesmerized by the sight, and let their weapons fall idle. To the Kuschepercans, the greatest threat to their victory was the Flying Dragon – a powerful symbol of Žaloudekian might. However, with the explosion that had torn the sky asunder, the Flying Dragon let out a pained cry. While there did not seem to be any lasting damage as it continued to hobble forth, the Flying Dragon no longer held the same prideful and terrifying visage for the Kuschepercans.

"Oooh!! The Silver Phoenix Knights had taken the first blow on the Flying Dragon!"

"L-look, the drawbridge!"

Immediately after, the New Kuschepercan army let out an even greater cheer. The impenetrable fortress that rested upon the Mulberry River has finally opened its gates as the drawbridge fell upon the river.

The path was now open. The final obstacles to their victory were neutralized. With renewed vigor and undeterred momentum, the Kuschepercan army bravely pushed on, carving a bloody path through the proud defense of the black knights as they rapidly approached the Tetraspides Fortresses.

"Tetraspides Fortresses belong to the Kuschepercans! We shall have you return what is rightfully ours!"

However, before the unstoppable torrent of Kuschepercans, a single Žaloudekian Silhouette Knight emerged from the gates.

“Really? Could they be lacking reinforcements? Perfect! Men, cut away at their meager defense and reclaim our fortress!”

As the Kuschepercans approached the lone Silhouette Knight, they soon realized its peculiar design. Juxtaposed upon the elegant white body and gold-plated rims, countless swords jutted out from its back, as if purposely ruining a work of art. A unit that could only be described as the product of a madman.

The Kuschepercan vanguard was immediately awash with a terrible premonition as they searched their memories. From their previous encounters, they knew the white and gold Silhouette Knights were characteristic of the Žaloudekian command unit. Despite their reservations, the opportunity was too sweet to pass up – with the fortress just within reach and only one unit remained standing in their way. Casting aside his worry, one of the Kuschepercan vanguard thrust its weapon at the lone unit.

Before anyone realized, the lone unit held a sword in its hand, but had seemingly already made its slash. Without being able to follow the entire attack, the Kuschepercan vanguard was bisected by the lone unit and collapsed into the river. At its sheer might, the Kuschepercan army’s advance stalled only inches away from total victory.

At that moment, the lone unit was the one to take a step. On the other side, despite their absolute numerical superiority, the Kuschepercans could only shirk back.

“Do not waver! No matter how strong the enemy is, it is just a single Silhouette Knight!”

As expected of the Kuschepercan vanguard, many brave Silhouette Knights stepped forth to engage the lone unit. No matter how strong the lone unit might be, it was restricted to swords. As such, Kuschepercans could easily seal its moves with a wall of shields.

However, contrary to their beliefs, the lone Silhouette Knight did not hesitate against the group of Revantiers, and with a carefully-placed jab with a short sword, decapitated a Revantier with ease. Swiftly, the lone unit stepped in the gap created by the downed Revantier, and with two swords, unleashed a torrent of strikes upon the Revantiers.

“Darn it! Why are we getting pushed back by a single Silhouette Knight?!”

The Kuschepercans launched attack after attack on the Silhouette Knight that stood alone. However, all of them were easily parried, by sword or scabbard, and received lethal counterattacks in return. By the time the dusts were cleared, only broken Revantiers lay around the lone Silhouette Knight.

“D-darn it... What is with that Silhouette Knight? How could a single unit wipe out our entire vanguard?!”

The massacre on the drawbridge was indescribable. To the Kuschepercans, the precision of its strikes was an awe-inspiring sight, if only trumped by the shock of the countless Revantiers that littered the drawbridge. While the Kuschepercan stood in shock, the lone unit uncaringly kicked away the broken Revantiers into the river below, as if clearing the drawbridge for a second charge.

“S-so that is the strength of a command unit? The incredible pressure that overpowers its foes... is it not unlike the Demon God?!”

A single unit that was able to completely suppress the entire Kuschepercan advance... ‘abnormal’ was the only term to describe such a coup.

“Fall back! We cannot simply win against it by numbers, so leave it to me!”

Edgar’s Ardiladcumber leapt between the stalled Kuschepercan army. With its mobile defense, Ardiladcumber now stood at the front of the formation.

“Cover my rear while I take care of it!”

“Understood! Be careful, that bastard is pretty strong.”

“Of course. I have seen what it did to the Revantiers.”

With Edgar’s orders, the first company spread out to the flanks. The first company was designed for defense, and as such, was armed with numerous shields in a similar fashion to Ardiladcumber.

They spread out to the flanks to assist the stalled Kuschepercan breakthrough with their strong defensive formation. Like an impenetrable wall, the first company now stood against the split Žaloudekian army attacking the spearhead from both directions.

“As expected, the enemy is taking full advantage of the chokepoint at the drawbridge. Although I doubt just anyone could pull such a feat off...” Edgar let out a sigh while gazing at the sight on the drawbridge.

Even if the drawbridge was wide enough for two Silhouette Knights to march abreast, it was still a severe chokepoint. Despite the Kuschepercan’s superior numbers, they were unable to overcome the lone defender simply because of the difference in individual power. Therefore, it was no surprise why the Žaloudekian unit would make its stand on the drawbridge.

“If we wish to break through that defense, we would instead need a small elite force.”

The lone Silhouette Knight was one who had singlehandedly defeated numerous Revantiers. As such, any run-of-the-mill Silhouette Knight would only feed the death count, and only the officers of the Silver Phoenix Knights would stand any chance for victory. Without Dietrich and Guyalarinde around, the only one who could be called upon was Edgar and Ardiladcumber.

“A Silhouette Knight armed with an obscene amount of swords... Was it the one that Di mentioned? The one that had bested Guyalarinde in melee combat... I guess it is worthy of an opponent Di acknowledged.” On a close inspection, Edgar furrowed his eyebrows.

Ardiladcumber charged forth, to which the lone Silhouette Knight responded in kind. The moment they entered melee range, Ardiladcumber shifted its mobile armor – not for defense, but for the Silhouette Arms hidden underneath.

Facing the sudden reveal, the Žaloudekian Silhouette Knight rapidly cut away the shots with his swords, before unleashing a slash at Ardiladcumber. Edgar immediately responded with the mobile armor, but was pushed back by the powerful blow.

“How could it overpower Ardiladcumber in strength?! Even the armor...”

Edgar leapt back to make some distance between him and the enemy. At a glance, Edgar could see Ardiladcumber’s mobile armor was warped from the heavy blow, with pieces of Strand Crystal flaking off. Edgar knew instinctively that if the fight were to continue, his Ardiladcumber would not last long. Taking

advantage of Edgar's momentary worry, the Žaloudekian Silhouette Knight pressed its advantage. With one sword parrying Ardiladcumber's sword, it dealt heavy blow to Ardiladcumber's armor with the other and forced Ardiladcumber back.

"Hahaha! You are no different from those trashes earlier! Seeing your movement, I was hoping that you would be at least as capable as that duel-wielding bastard!" A loud laughter came through the lone unit.

The relaxed and jovial announcement brought a surge of anger in Edgar.

"Duel-wielding? You mean Guyalarinde... the crimson knight?! So you *were* the nutcase he fought!" Edgar spat out in response.

"Oh? So you really are companion to that duel-wielding bastard. Here I had hoped that he would be here so we can have our rematch, but you shall do for now. I shall grant you the privilege to be defeated by me and my 'Death Sword'!" Gustav proudly declared.

For a battle junkie, Gustav could not help but grow excited before a capable foe. Opposite to Gustav, Edgar kept his focus on the opponent despite the disturbing laughter.

"Surely you jest. I could not let your rampage continue. For our victory, I will need you to step aside."

"Hahaha! I love an obstinate fellow. Go ahead! As long as I defeat someone as strong as you, I will make quite the dent on the rebel's morale!"

Gustav easily called Edgar's bluff. Surprisingly, the seemingly foolish opponent had an astute intuition, and had easily seen through Edgar's worry. Edgar's personal unit, Ardiladcumber, was indisputably among the strongest Silhouette Knights on the field. As such, if it were to be defeated, the Kuschepercan's morale was sure to crumble. Moreover, the symbolic importance of losing the drawbridge to the Žaloudekians after such a defeat would be catastrophic.

"Dream on!"

Ardiladcumber leapt at Death Sword while maneuvering its mobile armor and sword. Both sides intensely observed the other while probing for weaknesses. With Edgar's heightened concentration, he did not leave the slightest motion to

chance.

Only though his intense concentration did Edgar notice the slight change behind Death Sword. As a shadow came down upon it, Ardiladcumber immediately parried the attack and reorganized its defense.

“Ugh! Enemy reinforcements?!”

With the mobile armor shielding its front, Ardiladcumber kicked hard on the drawbridge to propel itself back. Immediately, the shadow pursued, and after a few hits against Ardiladcumber’s mobile armor, forced Edgar off the drawbridge. With Ardiladcumber’s retreat, the shadow slowly rose up next to Death Sword.

Edgar’s face turned extremely grim. He knew Death Sword was already a daunting foe by itself, but with the powerful new arrival, the battle would surely swing in the Žaloudekian way.

However, contrary to Edgar’s worry, the two Žaloudekian Silhouette Knights seemed to be at odds with one another.

“Hey! What the heck are you doing, ‘Bronze Fang’! That bastard is mine, so bugger off! Otherwise, expect some pain coming your way!” Death Sword loudly roared at its new shadowy companion.

“Ha! Dream on! Isn’t there still plenty of enemy over there? How much time are you planning to waste on a single rebel Silhouette Knight? If you have the energy, why not do what you were supposed to do and take out that King’s Mount?! Didn’t Her Excellency precisely hand you the Alkelorix for that purpose?” Shaking off Gustav’s rage, the shadowy Silhouette Knight jabbed back.

“...Hmph! What a twisted mouth you have... Fine. I will leave that white one to you!” Gustav was severely conflicted by the shadow’s words.

He loved to fight against strong opponents. It could even be argued that such fights were his greatest desire. However, aboard the Silhouette Knight granted to him by Princess Catalina, Gustav shouldered an important task that trumped his personal desires. Therefore, despite his own strong inclinations, Gustav was able to calm down from his battle fervor and reluctantly turn away from

combat.

“Wait, don’t you dare...”

“Out of the way!”

As Edgar attempted to intercept Death Sword, the black Silhouette Knight stood in his way, and with a flourish of the sword, forced Ardiladcumber to defend with its shield.

“Hey, don’t be so eager to leave. I’m your opponent, and I can’t have you keep on making trouble for us!”

With that said, the black Silhouette Knight launched a flurry of attacks, to which Ardiladcumber was not given a single opportunity to retaliate. While Ardiladcumber was preoccupied, Death Sword effortlessly strolled past him. Before Ardiladcumber could do anything, more black knights poured out from the fortress, with clear intent of mounting a counterattack.

“...How bothersome. Stay out of my way!”

“Bothersome?! That’s what I should be saying! No matter where I go, I always find you getting in my way! Even here...!!” Accompanied by a woman’s shouting, the black Silhouette Knight continued its flurry of attacks against Ardiladcumber.

While Ardiladcumber fended off the strikes with its sword and mobile armor, Edgar was somewhat baffled by the verbal abuse, but deep inside, he had an inkling of her meaning. With a gentle shake of his head, Edgar turned his focus onto the black Silhouette Knight in front of him.

“Looks like if we do not defeat you, we will be unable to advance. Then, let me give you my full attention, to bury you under my blade!”

As Ardiladcumber’s Ether Reactor loudly hummed, Edgar called upon all of its strength and leapt toward the enemy, to which the shadow replied in kind. With a sudden clash of white and black, the battle for the drawbridge over the Mulberry River intensified.



The Žaloudek garrison left the fortress and crossed over the Mulberry River.

With their glistening black knights, the garrison followed Gustav's charge into the wavering Kuschepercan ranks.

"Let's do this, Death Sword. Let us wash our past dishonor away with rebel blood!"

Death Sword sheathed its two longswords in hand, and drew a massive greatsword in their place. The sheer weight of the greatsword was enough to visibly strain the powerful strand crystal. Gustav's Death Sword was remodeled from the royal-exclusive Alkelorix, and as such, had strength unmatched by the standard Tyrantor. Therefore, despite the greatsword's weight, Death Sword was able to swing it with ease.

"Men! Follow me! Our target is under that gaudy banner – the Kuschepercan King's Mount! If we claim the head of their Queen, victory will be ours!" Gustav let out a terrible howl, while brandishing the massive sword like a baton.

With the signal, Žaloudekian black knights charged into the dumbfounded Kuschepercan Army.

"The enemy has begun a counterattack with the command unit in the lead!"

"We were so close to reclaiming the fortress. To think they launch a counterattack at this junction, and a strong one at that... but we cannot let our troops buckle at their aggression. Third company, prepare for launch!" Emrys, who commanded the battle in Gordesleo, quickly gave his orders to his surroundings.

At the orders, the third company's Tzendrinbles aimed their Vertical Launch Javelin Systems as the loader Silhouette Knights finished reloading the javelins. Understandably, the javelins not only were effective against Levitate Ships, but also could be used against ground targets.

"Target, enemy command unit! Fire!" At Gordesleo's command, the Tzendrinbles launched their javelins in unison.

With their launch, plumes of flame drew wide arcs on the sky as the javelins accelerated. With the distance, the javelins accelerated to the point where it could easily pierce the hardest steel.

"Ha! You think those dumb sticks could hit me?! Too naïve!"

While raising its massive sword, Death Sword accelerated toward the hail of javelins. Inside Death Sword, Gustav revealed a bone-chilling smile despite seemingly faced with certain death. With precise swings of the greatsword, Gustav cut away the javelins one after another. The same javelins that were able to destroy even the black knights with ease have been rendered impotent before the mesmerizing swordsmanship.

Silhouette Knights gained the title of being humanity's the strongest weapon not because of its size and destructive power alone. Rather, its design allowed the amplification of the 'Human Element' within. Before the sheer skill of the sword maniac Gustav, javelins were meaningless to Death Sword.

"Follow the commander! Do not worry about a few flying toothpicks! Let them feel the full fury of the black knights!"

The black knights raised their large shields, and followed Death Sword in its charge. Each of the Žaloudekian black knight following behind Death Sword were personally given their improved Silhouette Knight from Princess Catalina – the heavily armed CQB models. Even the powerful javelins could not pierce through both the thick shield and armor. It was a lesson of blood gained through the countless encounters against the Kuschepercans, and the Žaloudekians were finally able to devise a counter to the hail of javelins.

Soon, the javelins slowly cleared up, and nothing now blocked their view of the Kuschepercan core.

"The shower is over?! Then, I guess it's our turn!"

Death Sword began to creak as the strand crystals flexed in power. As if sweeping the path ahead with brute force, Death Sword dashed with incredible vigor. A unit that combined the strength of a Tyrantor and the agility beyond any known Silhouette Knight, Death Sword soon found itself back at the head of the charge.

On the other hand, the Kuschepercans could not help but gasp at the realization. The great 'weakness' of the javelin throwers, the sheer time it took to reload the javelins, meant that a pause to the attack was unavoidable. Not to mention, the loader and launcher units were vulnerable while the javelins were being rearmed. As such, the third company was clearly disturbed by the sudden

coup and was sluggish in their response.

“Žaloudekian scum! You shall not pass-... Gah?!”

“Begone! I have no time for you trash!”

In that time, Death Sword carved ahead with the same air as the Demon God, cutting down any hapless Revantier that dared to stand in its way. The black knights followed closely behind and filled up any gap before the Kuschepercan could respond. No one could stand against the might of Death Sword, and it advanced with impunity, as if parting the Kuschepercan forces with sheer will.

“E-enemy command unit is too strong! The troops can’t seem to stop it!” looking at the situation unfolding from the safety of the headquarters, Emrys cursed as he revved up Gordesleo’s Ether Reactor, “To think it was able to endure through the javelins without the slightest scratch. The Flying Dragon, and now this Silhouette Knight, Žaloudek sure have some problematic elites in their midst. The third company won’t be able to fire javelins any time soon, so second company, you are up! Do not let the enemy get close to Ellie! Let us blunt their advance here!”

“Got it! Leave the melee to us!”

With a loud horn, the Kuschepercan formation began to shift once more as the troops parted from the center.

At first, Death Sword was baffled by the peculiar development, and slowed its charge. Not a single Silhouette Knight seemed to now stand in its way toward the Kuschepercan headquarters.

Soon, a force of Silhouette Knights burst forth from the Kuschepercan headquarters, with a golden Silhouette Knight leading the charge. The Silhouette Knights that followed were all brilliantly decorated with a red cross.

“It is that dual-wielding bastard’s subordinates! Seemed like they had finally wised up to our attack. However, it matters little. Whoever that dares to stand in our way will be vanquished! Black knights, charge!!”

“Second company, draw! Anyone that dares to stand before us is an enemy! Cut them all down!”

With their swords drawn, the second company charged ahead without an ounce of hesitation. The company was known as the 'Assault Company', and as such, prefer to overpower any opponent with their sheer physical prowess.

Facing the new force that sallied out from the Kuschepercan headquarters, the black knights cast away their thick shields and drew their massive hammers. With a huge burst of speed, the CQB Tyrantors charged ahead and greeted the Kuschepercan attack head-on.

With a loud clash of steel and sparks, the two camps devolved into a chaotic melee. At the center of the storm, Gordesleo engaged Death Sword in combat.

"So you are the commander? You are too strong to leave alone, so I will have you defeated here!"

"Oh? What a gaudy fellow! Were there another command unit besides the King's Mount?"

Although Death Sword was burdened with countless swords large and small, its movement was surprisingly nimble. With greatsword in hand, Death Sword unleashed ferocious attacks upon the Gordesleo. However, Gordesleo was able to keep up with Death Sword in performance, and countered the blows with its own large sword.

As the two massive sheets of steel clashed with sparks flying, the very air surrounding them quivered. Under the cacophony of strand crystals, the two steel titans fought for supremacy.

"...H-how?!"

Soon, the balance tilted in Death Sword's favor. Between the two offensive models, Death Sword's ferocious attacks offered little room for Gordesleo to launch attacks of its own, and reluctantly forced Gordesleo into defense. Emrys gritted his teeth in face of Death Sword, but none of his hits could reach Death Sword.

Both Death Sword and Gordesleo were royal-exclusive models designed with the most advanced technology, and as such, their performance was largely comparable. Therefore, the difference in performance could only be explained by the abilities of its knight runner.

“As expected of the unit to cut down the flying javelins with a mere sword! S-strong... it is undoubtedly stronger than me.” Emrys’ acute intuition quickly came to the conclusion, “However!”

Rather than despair, Emrys’ blood boiled as he faced a truly worthy adversary. The muscles on his face warped into a terrifying smile as he let out a beast-like howl.

Death Sword continued to quicken the pace of its attacks. The feat of swinging its heavy sword with smooth movements despite the sheer weight was difficult to imagine, even with Death Sword’s reinforced strand crystals. It was a feat accomplished by relying on the centrifugal force of the sword, allowing for minimal efforts after the first swing by flowing from one attack to the next. A stance that allowed Death Sword to have the perfect offense and defense in one, all thanks to the genius of the sword maniac.

Surprisingly, even with his overwhelming power, Gustav was somewhat apprehensive of the development.

“This bastard is just refusing to go down! How obstinate could he be... despite only being a second-rate swordsman!”

Even under relentless attacks, Gordesleo stood strong and prevented Death Sword’s advance. For Gustav, whose mastery of the sword allowed him to easily gauge the skill of an opponent with a few simple exchanges, he could not help but be surprised when facing against an obviously inferior swordsman, yet still refused to go down.

Certainly, Emrys was only an amateur knight runner at best. However, his powerful fighting spirit and lack of hesitation, combined with the strength of Gordesleo, allowed him to hold on against Death Sword. If there was even the slightest hesitation or reservation, Emrys would likely be immediately cut down.

“No matter how strong you are, I will not give up that easily! As long as I still stand, this battle is not over!!”

Gordesleo obstinacy only further fueled Gustav’s apprehension and annoyance. He had to forgo the fight with Ardiladcumber in order to claim the head of the King’s Mount. Although Gordesleo was a reasonable opponent, it was a far cry from the skilled Ardiladcumber. As such, Gustav was awash with

dissatisfaction.

“How annoying, just die already!” Gustav let out an annoyed grunt.

In his haste to end the pointless struggle, Gustav called upon all the strength within Death Sword. As the strand crystals creaked from the incredible tension, Death Sword slashed its greatsword at Gordesleo, unleashing all its power behind the strike.

“Oooh!! Taste this!!”

Toward the slash, Gordesleo did not show even the slightest avoidance, and moved to intercept the blow head-on. As its air intake valve roared, Gordesleo arched its body slightly and swung its sword at the incoming blow.

The impact was just for a fraction of a second, but the shockwave was felt all around. As their swords shattered from the sheer force, both Gordesleo and Death Sword were flung back, creating a gap between the two units for the first time since combat started.

“Heh! To take my blow head-on! Not bad, golden one. You have some guts!” Gustav let out a loud laugh, “...But now your sword is broken. Surely you do not think you can win against me with that toothpick you are holding now?”

While Death Sword lost his greatsword through the exchange, it still had countless swords on his back of various shapes and sizes. Comparatively, although Gordesleo also got away with minor injury, it has lost its main sword, and Emrys knew the backup sword would be of little use against the powerful arsenal of Death Sword.

“Certainly, the situation is quite problematic, but...”

Emrys took a glance behind him. It was the Kuschepercan field headquarters, where the King’s Mount ‘Kartoga Ol Cauchard Secundus’ stood. Although Secundus could swing a sword, it would be hard to describe the action as anything more than a ‘swing’, and could not be counted upon for self-defense. Therefore, even in his current disadvantageous state, Emrys could not let the Death God near Secundus. As Gordesleo lowered itself in preparation for any upcoming attack, Emrys let out a long sigh.

“Oh? Although your swordsmanship is second-rate, you make quite the

convincing form, golden one. Very well, let me see how well you respond to my sword!” Gustav remarked as he altered his stance in response.

“You talk too much! However, your arrogance is quite understandable, and if I leave it like this, I will surely lose...”

As Death Sword charged over with a new sword in hand, Emrys racked his brains for the chance of victory.



With a red streak, Ikaruga flew straight at the Flying Dragon.

Behind it, the Aerial Assault Ship remained motionless in the sky. Boss, the head of the Silver Phoenix Knights knightsmiths, sat at the helm.

“Seriously, I am a certified knightsmith, not some Levitate Ship seaman...”

“Boss, to be honest, in the whole of Fremmevira and Kuscheperca, not a single person is certified to sail a Levitate Ship.” Batson sarcastically responded with his hands on the wheel.



Certainly, all of the crew on the Levitate Ship were knightsmiths. It was the result of the elite nature of the Silver Phoenix Knights, where there were a limited amount of hands to spare in combat. As such, when the knightsmiths finished their analysis of the Levitate Ships, they naturally took on the position

of crew.

“Everything is going according to plan, right? What is up next?” An unclear voice came through the voicepipes.

The voice came from the two Tzendrinbles locked in place behind the armored bow, with Ady and Chid inside. To ensure contact, the knighthsmiths forcibly connected voicepipes between each unit and the bridge, and bolted everything down to prevent the contraption from falling apart in flight.

The two Tzendrinbles largely existed to maintain the mana output after Ikaruga took off. Unlike the standard Levitate Ships, the Aerial Assault Ship was designed with a rocket propulsion system, which even the slightest movement would drain an exorbitant amount of mana. As such, the two Tzendrinbles were the bare minimum to allow some semblance of movement without Ikaruga.

“We should be helping Eru! How are the launchers coming along?!”

“About midway through the ship. They are trying their best, but I doubt the javelins could be launched again anytime soon.”

The ship lacked the storage space for the sheer number of javelins required by the ‘Multiple Launch Javelin System’, and they had at most one more full volley at their disposal. However, if the situation were to turn against them, a second volley would not change the outcome.

“From the look of it, we will have to place our hopes on the youngster. Hopefully, he will create the opportunity for the javelins to exploit.” Boss contemplated as his eyes fixed itself on the battle ahead.



With a deafening roar, the Flying Dragon flew toward the fortress once more. The sight of the approaching Dragon shocked the Kuschepercans battling near the drawbridge, who had no way to defend themselves against its powerful attacks.

“Ugh, is it planning to involve itself with the battle on the ground?!”

The descending Flying Dragon raised its head high, as if proudly posing in the sky. At the cost of raw speed, the Dragon magnified its intimidating air, to which

the Kuschepercan army momentarily paused their footsteps in awe.

“Do not fear! The Knight Commander shall be here-...!”

Before the officer could finish, a lone Silhouette Knight flew above the Kuschepercan army, propelled by bellowing flames. Like an arrow, Ikaruga chased the Flying Dragon, surrounded by the cheers of the Kuschepercans.

“Come! Time for round two! I won’t let you have your way this time!”

Seeing the approaching Demon God, Flying Dragon did not show any initial response. Since they have activated the Dragonblood Reactor, the Flying Dragon gave off an ominous air in its awakened state, as if silently roaring in the sky.

In an instant, the Lightning Curtain shrouded the entire Dragon, followed by a barrage of shots. The Flying Dragon itself charged toward Ikaruga, with ‘Fortification’ maintaining its structural integrity during the intense acceleration.

It could only be described as a force of destruction in the shape of a dragon, blitzing straight for Ikaruga. Even the powerful Ikaruga would not be able to survive an attack of such terrible magnitude. However, Eru remained on course without the slightest hesitation.

“Is that so~ Even the lightning defense got amplified with that power. Certainly, ramming me with that massive body and defensive spell is a wise tactic! But you should know, I do not need to meet the ‘whole’ of the Dragon~”

With ‘Emperor’s Heart’ and ‘Empress’s Coronet’ churning inside, Ikaruga prepared to fight the Flying Dragon with mana not shy of the division-class magic beast.

“I only need to break through at a single point with my significantly smaller Ikaruga!”

With both his hands on the command panel, Eru temporarily cut the power to the rocket propulsion and relied on inertial force to continue in the sky. At the same time, Eru revealed the Silhouette Arms behind him – each holding a sword with an empty center. At the base of the sword was a stout tube with spell runes etched on its silver plate surface.

“Let us see if your ‘Vouivre’ or my ‘Ikaruga’ is the greatest!!”

Ikaruga pointed the Sword Cannons toward the incoming Dragon and then unleashing countless red shots through the tip of the swords. Like a gigantic blooming carnation, the shots created a massive explosion on the Lightning Curtain of the Dragon. However, despite Ikaruga slowly falling from gravity, Eru did not lift the continued barrage.

The contest of wills did not last long. Compared to the Sword Cannons, the Lightning Curtain was stronger overall, but had to cover the entire Dragon. As such, under the pinpoint barrage, a small hole was soon torn through the immaculate defense, and through which, Eru charged in with his Ikaruga.

Seeing Demon God’s infiltration through its lightning defense, Doroteo revealed an almost indescribable rage. He could no longer know if his shaking was from the Dragon itself, or from his own fear. As he temporarily cast aside the terrible feelings, Doroteo gripped the controls tightly, and gazed at the Demon God with bloodshot eyes.

“The destruction of those five units of Anculosas would affect the Lightning Curtain to such a degree? To think it could brute force its way through our defenses! However, that ends now! As a moth to flame, I shall have you burned to ashes!!”

The Flying Dragon Battleship responded to the intruder by opening its massive jaws. From within, concentrated magic unleashed a firestorm before it. The greatest siege weapon known to the world, ‘dragonbreath’, poised to wash over Ikaruga with flames.

Despite breaking through the Lightning Curtain, Ikaruga was now trapped between the lightning and the fire. Its only path of escape was through the hole created by the barrage, but even that was impossible to evade the scorching flames. No matter how strong Ikaruga was, it could not exceed the innate defense of a standard Silhouette Knight, and was certain to perish in the flames.

“Dragonbreath~ That is just a siege weapon! It is useless against my Ikaruga!”

Ikaruga turned on the rocket boosters once more as it drew the mana channeled to the Sword Cannons back to its core. With a turn of the booster’s directional controls, Eru released a burst of flame toward the front. However,

Eru had no desire for Ikaruga to propel itself backwards. Rather, through a carefully placed burst, it cut into the incoming Dragonbreath. The two flames twisted onto one another before dissipating.

Not losing a beat, Ikaruga swiftly flipped the boosters around and returned to flight. Dragonbreath was the greatest weapon aboard the Flying Dragon Battleship, but Doroteo had mistaken its destructive nature. For it to maximize its damage, Dragonbreath need to immerse the target in flame for a lengthy time. However, when compared to the agile Ikaruga, it would be no more than an oversized magic shot.

“Secret Move: Ikaruga leaps over the Dragon’s Gate! That was fun. I should remember that for the future~”

Ikaruga continued to dance around the flames with precise booster control, and closed in on the Flying Dragon as if riding atop the flames.

Faced with the absurd sight, Doroteo could no longer rationalize his opponent. The Demon God danced freely in the ‘Sky’, as if rejecting the very notion of physics. Before long, Ikaruga found its way before the bridge. No one could explain the scene, or rather, only Eru alone could understand what had transpired.

“Y-you monster!!” Doroteo lashed out uncontrollably at the abnormal existence, and reflexively thrust the dragon’s horn toward Ikaruga.

The years of experience did not betray Doroteo, and his reflexive lunge managed to parry Ikaruga’s incoming sword blow. As sparks flew from the exchange, Ikaruga jetted to the rear of the Dragon.

“Has he moved back? D-darn it! The Anculosas back there are still broken!”

The Anculosas placed at the head of Flying Dragon had been disabled by the Multiple Launch Javelin Systems, and were still in a state of repair. Without any Silhouette Knights standing guard, Ikaruga would be free to land on the Flying Dragon. Knowing this fact, Doroteo stomped hard on the control plate.

Thanked to the earlier clash against the horn, Ikaruga was able to kill its forward moment and easily land on the Dragon, before making a dash to the center of the ship.

“Then... The Etheric Levitator, should be around the center-... ah?”

As Ikaruga tried to make a step, it suddenly started to lean on its side. Or rather, it was the whole Flying Dragon Battleship that tilted. Without a concern for the terrible creaking, the Flying Dragon was making a barrel roll, as if attempting to toss away the pest that had landed upon its back.

Despite the sudden change, Ikaruga calmly ignited its boosters to regain its balance, but just as it was about to land upon the back of the Dragon once more, a massive claw swept its way. The barrel roll was done not only to dislodge Ikaruga, but also to allow the dragon to deploy its greatest CQB attack.

“It’s the claws again! I had already seen it before!”

Eru’s response was incredibly swift. Unlike the previous encounter, where dodging took everything he had, Eru was well-prepared for the claw this time around. With a smooth motion, Eru unleashed the Sword Cannons upon the base of the claw. The fearsome barrage cut deep into the claw as fragments broke off one after another.

However, the shots alone were not enough as the claw continued its relentless approach. Just as the claw was about to shred Ikaruga, Eru activated the other function of the Sword Cannons, and cut deep into the heavily-damaged claw. As Ikaruga passed through the swing unharmed, the claw fell toward the ground below.

Ikaruga had survived through everything the Flying Dragon was able to throw at it. For Doroteo and his men, the shock alone was paralyzing.

Certainly, for the Flying Dragon, it had never gone on such lengths to defeat a single Silhouette Knight. With ‘Maximize’ activated, the Dragon should have more than enough strength to shred any Silhouette Knight or Levitate Ship that dared to stand in its way. However, reality was cruel, and their strongest attacks were all repelled with ease, with only a broken claw to show for their attempts.

“D-Demon God... What manner of demon are you?!” Doroteo and the rest of the crew felt reality draining away.

They were all emotionally prepared for the one that legends were sung, but they had never thought the Demon God to be this omnipotent.

Demon God had simply exceeded the realm of Silhouette Knights. An incredible agility coupled with an unmatched knight runner, the Demon God was able to singlehandedly defeat the seasoned Doroteo and his subordinates.

“Even the Flying Dragon is no match for the Demon God? No... It was overconfidence in the Lightning Curtain that led to the flame attack... and then to this tragic outcome!”

The initial damage was too severe. Even with the Dragonblood Reactor, the Flying Dragon would not be able to demonstrate its full potential without the Anculosas.

Just as they were wavering from the realization, they felt a sudden jolt of attack. At the rear of the Flying Dragon Battleship, there was a long tail used to stabilize the vessel, and that stabilizer was currently under siege by Ikaruga.

“...T-that bastard! Did he not leave?!”

At the Dragon’s rear, Ikaruga disconnected the Silhouette Arms on its back, revealing a wide silver nerve connecting the Arms to the Body. With a sudden burst, his ‘Rahu’s Fist’ shot into the tail, and tethered itself onto the Dragon.

Doroteo wrongfully assumed that the Demon God had prepared his attack on the rear. Rather, the Demon God was slowly creeping up the Dragon’s body, fully intent on exploiting a critical structural weakness. By the time Doroteo noticed the Demon God’s intent, no amount of barrel rolls were able to dislodge the tethered Demon Lord, and the battle between the two titans continued.



As Death Sword led the black knights in their charge at the Kuschepercan field headquarters, Ardiladcumber remained in a deadlock with the Black Silhouette Knight.

“Move aside!!”

“Hahaha...! No can do~ I have no interest in letting you go~”

Edgar shrugged off her taunting laughter, and carefully observed the movement of the enemy. Although he appeared calm, Edgar was deeply

anxious inside.

The sheer strength of the Demon Sword was an indescribable threat to the Kuschepercan Army. Although Emrys and the second company remained at the headquarters, Edgar could not help but worry about their prospects of survival against such a foe. To Edgar, the most prudent solution was to quickly resolve the current fight and rush to their aid.

The black Silhouette Knight was painted in the same color of Tyrantors, but the structure bore little resemblance. The entire built was rather slender, with only a slight protrusion on its back – presumably carrying all manners of weapon.

On close inspection, Edgar soon was awash with a sense of familiarity.

“Y-you were the one at Missillier-...?” Edgar let out a gasp.

During the night raid on Missillier, the Silver Phoenix Knights fought against a group of stealthy Silhouette Knights intent on seizing Princess Eleonora. The black Silhouette Knight that stood before Edgar not only resembled the attackers in shape, but also reflected the attackers in agile techniques.

“Huh? Hahaha! Correct.” The Knight Commander of the Copper Fang Knights, Kerhild, gave a forced laugh, “We were *thankful* for your hospitality~”

Kerhild was currently piloting a Silhouette Knight based on the earlier Wittendora, with custom modifications made for the command unit – a unit named ‘Veylocinos’. After the failure of the night raid, the Copper Fang Knights lost almost all their units in the ensuing counterattack. Only the lone command unit, Veylocinos, survived the onslaught. In reality, the Copper Fang Knights were for all intents and purposes, a defunct unit.

“How frustrating! You always make a mess no matter where you go! Even here, you had to go about annihilating my painstakingly reformed Copper Fang Knights! How could I possibly forgive you lot?!” Within Veylocinos, Kerhild revealed a warped expression.

As Veylocinos pressed ahead with unpredictable movements, Ardiladcumber suddenly came to a pause. Edgar had finally realized the source of his peculiar sense of familiarity.

“Y-your voice. It sounds like that person...” Edgar tightly gripped his control as the silver nerves channeled his rage into the strand crystals, “Y-you! Are you that ‘thief’?!”

Hearing Edgars anger, Kerhild maintained an uncaring visage, almost as if she enjoyed the anguish Edgar emitted.

“Haa? Why, aren’t you the forgetful one~ And after the night we shared together in each other’s embrace~ It took you this long to realize? You dopey knight! If I had known how often you would get in my way, I would have ended you right then and there! Oh, the regrets!!”

With a loud roar, Veylocinos lowered its stance and leapt at Ardiladcumber.

“It’s not too late! My dream has yet to end! Or rather, I refuse to let it end! As long as I return with your head, I still have hope. Consider this your just deserts!”

“Just deserts? The words of a thief are pointless, but I still have a promise to keep with a friend. The one to receive just deserts will be you! I shall have my vengeance for Earlecumber and the stolen Tellestarle, and reclaim my debt for Casadesus!”

With the encounter with a fated enemy, Edgar cast off his anxiety and was burning with vengeance. As if responding to the pilot’s will, Ardiladcumber lifted the mobile armors and unleashed a hail of shots from the weapons beneath. Veylocinos leapt aside to dodge the initial burst of shots, before breaking into a dash.

“Heh~ Why aren’t you the passionate one! Even my heart seemed to have skipped a beat~”

The remodelled Wittendora had an agility unlike any other Silhouette Knight, and was like a shifting shadow, cutting in and out of view.

All of a sudden, Veylocinos made a large stride toward Ardiladcumber, taking advantage of its leg armaments to attack, to which Ardiladcumber blocked with its mobile armor. Compared to before, Kerhild’s attack was crisp and accurate.

In the previous encounter at Casadesus, Kerhild was in the unfamiliar Tellestarle. Yet, despite her unfamiliarity, she was still able to defeat the

Earlecumber. Now, she was piloting a personalized Silhouette Knight, and was certainly significantly more of an opponent.

Even with the slightest opening, Veylocinos would make a timely attack. Edgar's intention was to repel her dominant sword with the mobile armor to create an opportunity for counterattack, but Kerhild easily foiled all his attempts. By the time Edgar had responded to Kerhild, Veylocinos had already moved away from the spot. With the absolute difference in agility, Veylocinos continued the skirmish without pause or worry.

After a few bouts, both sides were unable to inflict any critical wounds on the other. As such, Edgar changed his tactics, and relying on his superior defense, pressed the Veylocinos for a melee. By sealing Veylocinos' agility with its mobile armor, Edgar hoped to be able to land a crippling counterattack.

"Hahaha! I certainly don't mind an aggressive man~"

Edgar's expression was surprisingly calm despite the constant taunting, and kept his eyes locked on Veylocinos. At that moment, Veylocinos opened up its back, from which countless 'arms' emerged.

The arms were filled with joints, and at a glance, seemed to resemble a Silhouette Arm. However, to Edgar, it looked like countless spider legs growing out from Veylocinos' back.

With almost a spring-like character, the long arms lunged themselves at Edgar as the sharp tendrils gave an ominous glare. Ardiladcumber's left mobile armor was already occupied by the previous attack, and was unable to respond in time. Immediately, Ardiladcumber twisted its body to receive the unavoidable attack, bringing up the right mobile armor to shield the vulnerable core. At that moment, countless tendrils made contact with Ardiladcumber, and by virtue of sheer number, shaved away at Ardiladcumber's armor.

The damage was heavy, but Ardiladcumber was able to avoid any critical damage. Its steps remained steady, and its center of balance remained intact. As Edgar planned to make a counterattack, Veylocinos took a leap back once again.

"Tsk! Your reaction was quite impressive, and I am surprised my attack was unable to finish you off. So? What do you think? I call it 'mobile assault arms', a

flexible weapon that suits my desires perfectly~”

Having already revealed her card, Kerhild find no reason to hide it any longer. With that said, Veylocinos returned to the attack with its arms.

“Aaah!!”

“Ugh!”

With a sound like snakes and a shape like spider legs, Veylocinos’ mobile assault arms launched a barrage of attack in perfect unison with its physical arms. Edgar responded with the careful placement of his mobile armors to resist the torrent of attacks. A contest began between the spear and the shield – between the mobile assault arms and mobile armor. It was a clash between two opposite principles.

Soon, the fight devolved into an uneasy stalemate.

“Ahaha~ Don’t this bring back memories?! Weren’t you turtling like this during our first encounter?!”

No matter how Kerhild taunted, Edgar remained calm and steadily repelled one hit after another, constantly searching for an opening. Yet, Veylocinos’ dynamic attacks provided little in the ways of a counterattack.

No opening? Could that really be true?

A curious thought made its way into Edgar’s mind.

The mobile assault arms were designed to function as additional arms. However, the pilot is still a mere human... Could a single knight runner really be able to control that many arms alone?

To Edgar’s knowledge, such a feat was extremely difficult, and he knew of only a single madman who could pull off such intricate controls – Ernesti.

While it was certainly possible that Kerhild could match Eru in skill, there was a much simpler answer. Likely, the Veylocinos’ arms function under the same principle as Edgar’s mobile armor, relying on a few predetermined patterns and the knight runner to select the pattern that best fit the situation.

Edgar carefully observed Veylocinos for any patterns while maintaining his defense. With his prior experience in the development of mobile armor, Edgar

did not take long to catch a few patterns. With an understanding of the patterns, Edgar was able to effortlessly defend against the repeated lunges.

“This bastard... Has he seen though the mobile assault arms in such a short period of time?!”

Seeing Ardiladcumber’s smooth movements, Kerhild broke in cold sweat.

“He is dangerous... Despite getting bombarded by my ferocious attacks, he was still able to remain calm. Certainly, I had always felt him to be a problematic bastard from back then...”

From experience, Kerhild knew the white Silhouette Knight tend to lean heavily on defense, only to counterattack when an opening was discovered. Even in the previous encounter, he was able to cut away the stolen Tellestarle’s arm – a failure Kerhild had little interest in repeating. As such, Kerhild decided that rather than playing into Ardiladcumber’s defenses, it was more prudent to create some distance.

“My moves have been completely analyzed, so repeating the same attacks would serve little purpose. Not to mention, I am also worried about my mana reserves...”

Compared to the melee-oriented Ardiladcumber, Veylocinos has greater mana expenditure, and would certainly be the first of the two to run out in a prolonged battle.

Before Kerhild could put her plans into actions, Ardiladcumber went onto the offensive. Shifting away the mobile armor, Ardiladcumber unleashed a hail of shots Veylocinos. However, Kerhild immediately responded to the attack. With a lowered posture, Veylocinos broke into a full dash. The mobile assault arms did not stay idle, and with carefully timed stabs into the ground below, propelled Veylocinos to an even greater speed.

“Hehehe! You should let a girl rest after such a steamy exchange. How brutish of you~”

“What an annoying trick!”

At the approaching Veylocinos, Edgar expanded the mobile armor into a full defense shell. Yet, instead of a direct attack, Veylocinos launched itself into the

air with its many 'legs' and landed immediately behind the bracing Ardiladcumber.

“Ahaha! What a fool! You think my Veylocinos is the same as those run-of-the-mill Silhouette Knight?!”

Having circled around the front, Veylocinos charged at the back of Ardiladcumber with its dagger in hand. Kerhild knew her trick would likely not work for a second time, and was fully intent on ending the combat with this blow.

On the other hand, Ardiladcumber was put in a disadvantageous position with Veylocinos' daring maneuver, and knowing Veylocinos' greater agility, decided to take an incredible gamble.

The mobile armor opened up like a pair of steel wings and collided with the mobile assault arms. Despite the collision, Veylocinos showed no signs of slowing down. With a dagger in hand, Kerhild accurately aimed for a gap between the plates to deal the fatal blow to Ardiladcumber.

“It's not over! Ardiladcumber! Show her... your power!!”

Edgar immediately opened the control panel, and began pressing the buttons inside. By activating the emergency bypass, Edgar was able to 'release' certain spells, and soon, the 'Fortification' was shut down.

Without 'Fortification', the mobile armor no longer had any means to hold it together, and soon fragmented. With the mobile armor dissipated, the mobile assault arms were once again free to resume its lunge.

On the other hand, the sudden release from heavy armor allowed Ardiladcumber to quickly turn around, forcing Veylocinos to barely miss its mark.

“Bastard! Why won't you just die!!”

Knowing her strike had failed, Kerhild tried to make some distance between her and Ardiladcumber. However, Ardiladcumber, now without the burden of its heavy armors, was able to barely keep pace.

With its buckler as a bludgeon, Ardiladcumber swung down hard on the head

of Veylocinos, smashing it into pieces. Deprived of its vision, and littered with broken fragments of armor, Veylocinos wobbled from the lack of balance.

“Y-you bastard! What have you done!!”

With the light taken out of her monitor, Kerhild angrily lashed out at her attacker with mobile assault arms. Given Ardiladcumber’s lack of armor and close proximity, Kerhild was not hindered by the lack of vision, and only needed to attack in the general direction of the previous attack.

Despite the incoming lunges, Ardiladcumber pressed ahead with a sword in hand. The attacks shaved and cut away at the arms and legs, but Ardiladcumber remained steadfast in its charge. The disabled Veylocinos had no way to anticipate or dodge the fateful blow, which plunged deep into its chest, bringing with it the screech of metal. Ironically, it was an exact opposite to the duel between Earlecumber and the stolen Tellestarle.

“Veylocinos...! W-why? How could I...! Darn it...”

The attack had destroyed the air intake, and the sound of broken parts rubbing against one another echoed in the cockpit. Kerhild knew that she had lost.

With the mana supply cut off, Veylocinos had no chance of moving. With a large click of her tongue, Kerhild quickly turned to opening the frontal hatch and leapt out, without a single concern for the height of the drop. Kerhild needed to get away while the enemy remain focused on Veylocinos. Without taking a glance back, Kerhild prepared her escape.

However, to her surprise, the destroyed Veylocinos was tossed before her, blocking her path. As Kerhild waved away the dust, she came face to face with a beaten and battered Ardiladcumber. No matter how nimble Kerhild was, escaping from the focus of a Silhouette Knight was simply too much.

“Ahaha... Hey, are you serious? A noble knight like you won’t attack an unarmed human with a Silhouette Knight, right?”

Even when pushed into a corner, Kerhild still sought for a chance of survival. She tried to appeal to the sense of chivalry, and hoped to be spared. However, her hopes fell on deaf ears as Ardiladcumber raised its sword high.

“I have said it before, there is still the matter of the ‘debt’. This war began with that stolen Tellestarle... Since I wasn’t able to prevent it then, let me at least end it now!”

Before Kerhild could react, the massive steel sword came down upon her with all the power the strand crystal could give.

“Aaah!! Nooo!”

As the earth split from the impact, dusts and rocks flew up into the sky. By the time everything had settled, not even blood remained. Such was the fate of a human to receive the attack of a Silhouette Knight.

Ardiladcumber paused for a moment, before straightening up and turning to the front.

“...The nemesis of the Silver Phoenix Knight has been taken care of. Stay safe, everyone.”

With its battered body, Ardiladcumber pushed itself onward. During the time Edgar was in combat with Veylocinos, Death Sword was rampaging at the Kuschepercan Headquarters. With his past grudges resolved, Edgar dashed to the aid of his friends.

Chapter 46: The Dragon's Resolve

The New Kuschepercan army finally seized the initiative in the Siege of Tetraspides Fortresses.

The Silhouette Gears wonderfully broke through the impregnable fortresses, and, by dropping the drawbridge, the Kuschepercans now have gained a foothold. With newfound vigor, the Kuschepercans took the opportunity to press their advantage. As long as Tetraspides Fortresses fell to New Kuscheperca, the old capital, Delvincourt, would be within arm's reach.

Faced with the disadvantage, the Žaloudekians did not wish to just meekly wait for their demise. With Gustav at their lead, the Jade Dragon Knights launched a daring sortie against the Kuschepercan field headquarters. Their target was the King's Mount and the Queen within. Opposite to the Jade Dragon Knights stood the Silver Phoenix Knights' second company, tasked with the Queen's defense.

“Charge!! Break through their advance! As long as we take the head of the Queen, victory will be ours!!”

The ground rumbled loudly as dust shrouded the air. The black knights continued their relentless charge in their armored formation, like a boulder rolling down a hill, smashing all that dared to stand in their way.

On the other end, the Silver Phoenix Knights' second company stood at the ready. Despite the heavily armored black knights that could plow away the Karrdatolles with ease, the second company remained steadfast in their approach.

The Karrdatolles began the battle with a salvo of their Silhouette Arms as they closed the distance. The focus of their barrage was the upper half of the black knights, with the hope to destroy the Tyrant's heads and disable their vision. However, the Tyrantors simply raised their shields in defense and easily resisted the shots that rained down upon them.

“Do not underestimate the black knight's armor! This level of bombardment is impotent before us!”

With their enemies before their eyes, the black knights steadied their charge. Like a hammer of destruction, the black knights poised to plow through the lightly armored Karrdatolles, smashing them to dust. However, the agile Karrdatolles avoided the brunt of the impact and, with a gentle sidestep, let the black knights flow through their ranks.

The Jade Dragon Knights wanted to change course and engage the Karrdatolles, but their momentum precluded them from any immediate response. Understandably, with the sheer momentum of the charge, it was only expected that the Karrdatolles would choose to avoid. The Jade Dragon Knights knew that a dodge was likely, but the hail of shots dulled their senses and obscured their view.

With the Karrdatolles' timely maneuver, the second company was now optimally wedged against the side of the Tyrantor formation. Taking advantage of the opportune development, the Karrdatolles launched a devastating counterattack on the Tyrantors' flanks with their dual-wielded swords.

Karrdatolles were built with the superior strength of the 'eastern models' and, with large slabs of thick steel in the vague shape of a sword that seemed to pummel more than it slash, cut deep into the armored Tyrantors. Shards of strand crystal and armor were scattered with every blow, and, with the crippling damage to their frames, the heavy Tyrantors began to wobble from the loss of balance.

"Ugh... Bastards! Why? Why would you dare to fight the Tyrantors frontally! Do you not realize a single Tyrantor blow would smash you to pieces?!"

The Tyrantors' knight runners were flabbergasted at the recklessness of the second company. To attack an enemy that could easily destroy them with a single blow, no sane person would take up on the task.

"A single blow? That is just a normal day with the magic beasts! How could we possibly call ourselves knight runners if we are afraid of something like that?" The Karrdatolle's knight runner replied.

Certainly, no one present could point out that even among the Fremmeviran knights, few could match the second company in ferocity. Under the unrelenting attacks, the black knights were being slowly forced back and

crushed. Furthermore, having their unstoppable advance turned back had thrown the Jade Dragon Knights into disarray.

Tyrantors were built with a focus on the overwhelming power in their strikes. This concept had worked to their advantage against the Kuschepercans, but had revealed a critical flaw in the melee against the Silver Phoenix Knight's second company. The overt focus on power had led Tyrantors to neglect their agility, with the powerful but unwieldy hammer as an exemplary result of the doctrine. In combat against the Kuschepercans, Tyrantors would use their superior armor to shrug off blows and then counterattack in force. However, against the powerful Karrdatolles, their armor could no longer be relied upon.

Unlike the stopgap Silhouette Knights used by the Kuschepercans, Karrdatolles were able to pierce through Tyrantor's armor with its large swords and cut deep into the strand crystals underneath. With a lateral slash inside the Tyrantors' soft interior, the strand crystal structure would become irreversibly damaged, and, with the loss of structural integrity, the Tyrantors would be open to further attacks. In this vicious cycle of attacks, it was only a matter of time before the Tyrantors fell to the Karrdatolles.

Under the ferocious attacks, the second company steadily shaved away at the numbers of Tyrantors.



"Hahaha! This is certainly problematic. Losing the longsword has turned into quite the handicap for me. This fellow is not going to be defeated by a mere backup sword."

The battle between Emrys and Gustav was tilted in favor of Death Sword. Gordesleo had endured countless blows, with clear signs of damage sewn all across its armor. If Eru had not designed Gordesleo with improved defense, Emrys would surely have perished under Death Sword's powerful strikes.

"Ha! What happened to all that spirit earlier? You can't seem to mount a counterattack at all. If my blow was a little bit heavier, you would have already been finished!" Faced with Gordesleo's pitiful appearance, Gustav scoffed with a condescending remark.

"Hmph! Dream on. Gordesleo and I will not be defeated that easily!" Emrys

shot back at Gustav.

“I don’t mind a bit of bluff, but you clearly could not back that statement up in your current state.”

Emrys has remained steadfast against the overwhelming odds. However, Emrys knew very well that the longer he drew the battle out, the less the chance for his victory, especially with Gordesleo’s mounting injuries.

No, I still have a chance. As long as I can find an opening to use ‘Blast Howling’!

Gordesleo’s secret trump card, Blast Howling, was an attack strong enough to wipe out a medium-ranked magic beast. Therefore, no Silhouette Knight who received such a powerful shot could survive. However, the powerful attack required time to charge, time that Gordesleo desperately lacked under Death Sword’s relentless strikes. At that moment, Emrys could only hope for an ally to capture the attention of Death Sword, long enough for the opportunity to present itself.

“Hey, are you underestimating me? I’ll teach you to let your mind wander while fighting me!”

In the moment of thought, Emrys revealed a small crack in his defense. Before Emrys could cover the weakness, Death Sword has already moved to attack.

“Ugh, another one of those absurd moves!”

Emrys has only fallen behind by just half a beat, but was pressed into the corner by the aggressive Death Sword. Taking aim at the critical joints, Death Sword sought to cripple Gordesleo and break through the deadlock. Emrys barely managed to parry one of the swords before the other swung down hard on Gordesleo.

“You know, swords are not the only weapon in the world!”

Gordesleo clenched its left hand into a fist and blocked the second sword with its arm. Upon impact, shards of crystal and metal scattered to the wind. It was a move of desperation that would surely not last a second time.

“Oh? Not bad, but now you are done for!”

Hearing Gustav's loud declaration, Emrys could only grit his teeth. Certainly, he had to sacrifice his armor to endure through the attack, but the fight was far from over. With a twist of his body, Death Sword carried through the momentum of his attack and quickly launched a third blow. By now, Gordesleo was completely spent and could no longer defend against the impending strike.

Just moments before the strike, a unit flew between Death Sword and Gordesleo and, with an unsuspecting shot, broke Death Sword's longsword mid-swing. The surprised Gustav quickly leapt back as he drew a replacement from Death Sword's impressive arsenal.

"Hey, don't cut into another's fight!"

"Hahaha! So what? This was my intention all along! But aren't you a slow one, Edgar! The battle over here had heated up for quite some time already!"

Seeing the new arrival, Emrys could not hold in his excitement.

"Apologies, young master. I had an appointment with an old 'acquaintance' that I could ill afford to miss." Edgar responded in the battered Ardiladcumber, holding a Silhouette Arm in hand still glowing faintly from the recent shot.

"Haa...! To think after all that boasting, Copper Fang was done in so easily. Regardless, I give you praise for your victory, but I hope you aren't seriously thinking about challenging me with that piece of scrap!"

Gustav was not wrong with his statements. Ardiladcumber's damage was not any less than that sustained by Gordesleo. Its characteristic mobile armor was lost, and its once beautiful white armor was now dotted with holes. Even the Silhouette Arm was torn from a dysfunctional sub-arm and barely made to work.

"Do not underestimate me. As long as Ardiladcumber could move, it would be sufficient."

"Seriously! It seemed the fools have multiplied!"

"...Or so you think. With my arrival, our tactical options have also multiplied!"

Edgar's boasts were not without basis.

While he kept the attention of Gustav, Gordesleo has been silently circling

around to Death Sword's rear, poising to sandwich Death Sword between the two. It was a simple but effective maneuver, as no matter how brilliant a pilot, Gustav would be hard-pressed to defend against attacks from opposite sides.

"Not to mention, you think we are your only opponents? Look around you. Gaze upon the remains of your subordinates while you indulged in your fight!" Edgar raised his sword and pointed to the surroundings.

Gustav was alerted by Edgar's words and quickly scanned around. Many of the original formation of black knights that had followed his charge were left disabled on the ground, a clear reflection of the ferocious second company. Only a few straggling black knights continued to fight.

"Fools! How dare you do that to my men! I see that you half-dead bastards are getting a bit full of yourselves! In that case, let me bury you with your pieces of scrap!!"

Before Death Sword could act, Ardiladcumber took the initiative and swung its sword at Death Sword. At the same time, Emrys launched an attack from the opposite side. Despite the injuries sustained by Ardiladcumber and Gordesleo, Gustav would still have a hard time responding to a simultaneous attack from opposite sides. However, contrary to expectations, Death Sword swung its weapons with maddening efficiency and repelled the pincer with ease.

Having their offensive parried, Ardiladcumber and Gordesleo were put off-balance and could not defend against Death Sword's follow-up attack. With a short sword, Death Sword delivered critical strikes to their units.

"Heh, I think it's about time to wrap this up. Oooh!! 'Awaken, Death Sword'!!" Gustav roared.

In an instant, countless swords on Death Sword's back flew out of their sheaths and, with simplified sub-arms, were held at the ready. Gordesleo and Ardiladcumber were taken aback by Death Sword's sudden transformation.

"What the heck? Are you playing porcupine? How could you possibly fight like that?"

"This is perfect. I am no longer the *parrying* blade, but a powerful *sword* devoted to *cutting* you all down. Let your body experience my wrath!"

It was the ramblings of a madman. For Gustav, the countless swords on Death Sword served not only as weapon, but also as armor. To abandon the 'sheath' meant that Death Sword was now wholly devoted to attack, unshackled to demonstrate its power as an avatar of destruction.

"Hiyaa!!"

With an entire body covered with swords, Death Sword lunged itself toward Ardiladcumber. Ardiladcumber quickly readied its sword and shield to defend against the onslaught.

Sparks flew as the two units clashed head-on. Under the flurry of strikes, Ardiladcumber was clearly being pressured. Before long, Death Sword broke through Ardiladcumber's defense and thrust itself into the chest. As shards of crystal flew, Ardiladcumber slowly crumbled onto the ground.

"Hahaha! And that's one! Now... time for number two!" Gustav loudly declared.

Without a care for his surroundings, Gustav swiftly turned to engage Gordesleo. At Death Sword's charge, Gordesleo reflexively shielded its vulnerable core with its arms. However, Death Sword had seen through its intentions and, using its countless swords, pushed Gordesleo aside. In a simple comparison of strength, the awakened Death Sword was greater, and, with Gordesleo's balance broken, Death Sword launched a critical strike at that opening. To avoid being skewered, Gordesleo punched at the approaching blade, but was blown back by the sheer impact.

With the two units brought down in quick succession, Death Sword proudly stood as the air intake valves roared to feed the voracious reactor.

"...That little act had drained a surprising amount of mana."

Following Gustav's specifications, the 'Awakening' would unleash powerful offensive capabilities at the cost of increased mana consumption. With a complicated smile, Gustav activated the Ether Supplier. As Ethelite were broken down to its constituent parts and converted to concentrated Ether, Death Sword recovered its usual vigor.

"Hehehe, thanks to you two, I have finally gotten around to needing this little

toy. Therefore, I bid you to sleep soundly, knowing you had pushed me to such lengths!”

With that said, Death Sword leapt toward the wobbling Ardiladcumber with the clear intent to finish it off. The critically damaged Ardiladcumber was no different from a living target and meekly stood there as Death Sword approached. As the sword on its back rattled, Death Sword swooped at Ardiladcumber.

Given the damage it sustained, Ardiladcumber would not survive a direct attack from Death Sword, and the only way to avoid destruction was to dodge. As such, Gustav was fully prepared for any suspicious movements that would bring Ardiladcumber out of harm’s way.

However, Edgar remained steadfast at the approaching Death Sword and, rather than displaying any intent to dodge, stepped forward to receive the strike. Despite Ardiladcumber’s inexplicable actions, Gustav remained on course, since Gustav knew full well that there was little Ardiladcumber could do to reverse Death Sword’s overwhelming power.

“...Ardiladcumber, let’s do this!”

Moments before impact, Ardiladcumber had its fist outstretched to intercept the sword strike. As Death Sword sunk its swords deep into Ardiladcumber, shards of metal and crystal scattered when the strand crystals were torn asunder.

“Hahaha! Now you won’t even be able to hold a sword! Since you are so eager to die, let me fulfill your wish...?!”

Before Gustav could finish, Ardiladcumber pushed forward and, in doing so, lodged more of Death Sword’s swords into its injured body.

At that moment, Gustav noticed that despite its crippling injuries, Ardiladcumber had perfectly preserved the cockpit from harm. As such, it could only be explained as a sacrificial move to pin Death Sword in place.

“...Finally stopped you from prancing around. Are you ready? It’s time of your reckoning!”

“Lies! What could you possibly do in that state of yours? It won’t take long for

me to break out, and when I do..." Gustav suddenly stopped halfway and turned to look behind him.

Certainly, Ardiladcumber wasn't the only enemy he had to worry about.

"That's right, we are not fighting alone." Emrys declared.

During the exchange with the white knight, Gordesleo had long stood up and, under the control of Emrys, revealed the hidden magic devices tucked underneath the golden armor. As mana surged into the activated scripts, the magic devices began to hum with energy.

"That bastard... has a hidden weapon?! Darn it! Let go, you madman! Are you planning to take me to the graves with you?!"

Realizing the gravity of the situation, Gustav began to struggle frantically to break free from Ardiladcumber's grip. On the other hand, Ardiladcumber slowly turned the panicked Death Sword toward the charging blast.

"Taste Gordesleo's greatest attack! 'Blast Howling'!!"

The magic devices all activated at the same time as Gordesleo unleashed 'Blast Howling', a form of wind magic. The magic concentrated and pressurized the nearby air, refracting even the light. In a sudden burst, the blast tore through the air as it washed over Death Sword and Ardiladcumber. With all its mana spent, Gordesleo slowly collapsed onto the ground after the magnificent display of might.

Across from Gordesleo, Death Sword and Ardiladcumber were both caught in the blast wave and tossed helplessly into the air before crashing into the ground. Covered from head to toe with broken swords, Death Sword rolled on the ground before coming to a motionless stop. The concentrated ether leaked out from between the armor plating, creating a cacophony of color as it sprayed into the surrounding air. Having received the brunt of 'Blast Howling', Death Sword has been inflicted catastrophic damage, with both its air intake valves and Ether Supplier irrecoverably destroyed.

Behind Death Sword, Ardiladcumber also lay motionless on the ground. As its mangled chest armor was forced open, Edgar peered out through the cockpit door.

“I have no intention to accompany someone as obnoxious as you in death, but that was quite the gamble.”

Moments before the impact, Edgar had forcibly pulled Death Sword in front of him as a human shield to keep Ardiladcumber from the brunt of the blast. As such, he was able to escape complete destruction. However, despite their best efforts, Ardiladcumber still ended up with crippling injuries, with its limbs completely immobilized by the strength of the blast.

“Hey, Edgar, good to see that you are still alive! Even though we timed our opportunity perfectly, I was still anxious when we carried it out.”

At that moment, Emrys climbed out from the battered Gordesleo in a similar manner as Edgar. With a bright smile plastered across his face, Emrys raised his arms toward the sky in triumph.

“Honestly, it was quite close. Young master, your control of ‘Blast Howling’ is terrific.”

Edgar had seen the full power of ‘Blast Howling’ during its testing. If Emrys had unleashed ‘Blast Howling’ in full, Edgar would surely have perished alongside Death Sword. As such, Edgar was certain Emrys held back out of consideration for his survival.

“Ahaha, really? That was probably because of the lack of magic-... I mean, aren’t I awesome?!” Emrys nervously replied and turned his gaze away from Edgar.

“Y-young master?”

Emrys’ slip of tongue made the two share a nervous laugh together.

“Haa~ Looks like I have lost again.”

Surprisingly, Gustav also survived through the blast. Thanked to Gordesleo’s lack of mana, the well-built royal-exclusive model was able to shield him from harm.

Gustav tried to fiddle with the controls, but to no avail. He could only gaze helplessly as the display slowly faded to black from the loss of power. With Death Sword’s eyes fixed squarely at the Flying Dragon that casted a plume of

flame across the sky, Gustav opened a communication channel.

“Sorry, old man... looks like this is as far as I’ll go.” Gustav lamented.

With the defeat of the Žaloudekian sortie led by Death Sword, the Tetraspides Fortresses’ defense was sure to crumble. The only one left to defend Kingdom of Žaloudek was the Flying Dragon.

“... I shall leave the rest to you, old man. Please avenge us.”

With the last of the message sent, Gustav descended into silence. With all the haphazard modifications made to the unit, Death Sword could not hold its structure together with the loss of its mana supply. As Death Sword’s ember of life slowly burned out, Gustav sat silently in the darkness.



The Flying Dragon appeared to fly drunkenly through the sky. Rather than mechanical failure, it was a dance brought about by the desire to throw off a particular Silhouette Knight latched onto its tail.

Ikaruga slowly moved toward the body of the Dragon, firmly anchored to the structure by the repeated launch and retraction of Rahu’s Fists. Certainly, given the Dragon’s chaotic movements, Ikaruga would not be able to advance with such leisure if it was not tethered down like a mountain climber.

Soon, Ikaruga made its way to the trunk of the Dragon. With its body fastened onto the surface, Ikaruga raised its Sword Cannon.

“The massive weapon made possible by combining Levitate Ship with Silhouette Knights... its combat potential is certainly stunning. However, in the end, it is just a single unit, and, as such, weaknesses could easily be found. As long as I am tethered down like this, it is impossible to shake me off.” Eru gazed upon the back of the Flying Dragon Battleship affectionately, “Weapons created by the hands of men always sought greater destructive capability. However, to equate size with power is, for lack of better words, simply tasteless.”

With a few simple commands, the Sword Cannon held by Ikaruga’s many arms began to glow.

“In the end, I still find humanoid weapons to be the best. In its perfected

form, humanoid weapons are an effective amplification of the human body. I am very fortunate to have arrived in a world where that wonderful principle has existed since time immemorial, so how could you carry on such blasphemous thoughts? Even if you obstinately pursued a large weapons platform, it should still be as mere support to Silhouette Knights. Either way, I think it is about time for our battle to end and for you to be laid to rest.”

Ikaruga stood on the Dragon, where the Lightning Curtain could not reach. Tethered together with its target, Ikaruga could not possibly miss. As it turned all the Sword Cannon on the Dragon, Ikaruga unleashed a hail of shots.

“Hahaha! Taste this!” As if announcing the climax of the battle, Eru let out a devious laugh.

As the barrage punched through the layers of armor, the Flying Dragon twisted as fire bellowed out from its interior. Some of the shots pierced all the way to the helm of the ship, where Doroteo and the others sat in command of the ship.

All around him, the reinforced structure began to disintegrate, as pieces of the Dragon fell toward the ground below. Faced with the crippling strike, the massive Flying Dragon shook violently as it was forced to change direction. However, despite the explosions, the experienced Doroteo maintained his tight grip on the controls.

“No, it cannot be... How can an existence so easily surpass the power of the Flying Dragon?!” Doroteo loudly cried out with bloodshot eyes.

Enduring the terrifying bombardment, Doroteo and his subordinates were fraught with anxiety. In his worry, Doroteo once again tried to dislodge the Demon God from the surface of the Dragon with a vigorous swing. It was likely a fruitless endeavor, but with Demon God tightly latched onto its body, Doroteo was left with few tactical options. With most of its Anculosas disabled, the Flying Dragon could no longer hope to screen the Demon God away with shots.

“Oh? Still trying to throw me off? You should know that trick won’t work for a second time.”

Feeling the sudden shift in balance, Eru immediately added a few more Rahu’s Fists to strengthen its anchor. With four fists tightly gripping the Dragon’s body,

Ikaruga would not be so easily thrown off.

Before his eyes, Eru could see the rapidly rotating landscape. As the wave of centrifugal force washed over Ikaruga, Eru gritted his teeth and endured through the crushing g-force.

“B-before you can get your way, I shall make you... stop!”

Ikaruga stabbed its Sword Cannons into the deck and forced shots directly into the interior of the Flying Dragon. Despite repeatedly missing the Etheric Levitator, Eru was able to inflict crippling damage to the internal frame and shaved off pieces of crystal and steel. As the damage slowly mounted, the Flying Dragon could no longer risk any aggressive maneuvers and resolved to meekly fly through the sky.

“W-why?! Why is this happening?! Why can’t we win against a mere Silhouette Knight?!”

Doroteo’s common sense screamed out against the abnormal development. The Flying Dragon and Ikaruga were like a pair of twins, both born far ahead of its time. Based on the most advanced theories and honed by passion that bordered madness, the opposing pair was heralds of their type.

On one hand, Flying Dragon was the synthesis of its many Silhouette Knights. As a crystallization of teamwork, it subsumed the output of an entire squad to a single will and granted the Flying Dragon with unimaginable power.

On the other hand, Ikaruga relied on the existence called Eru. Aside from its powerful twin reactors, Ikaruga’s greatest potential lay within Eru’s unique ability to assume ‘direct command’ of its scripts, through which every one of Eru’s thought could be translated into action and allowed Eru to act as one with his unit.

In contrast to the Flying Dragon’s emphasis on quantity, Eru demonstrated the pinnacle of quality Silhouette Knight operation. It was the product of a madness not native to their world and, without Eru, would likely to never have come to existence.

“Darn it. This is not over!!”

Doroteo shook away the fear that had gripped him and, with all his will,

regained control of the Dragon.

With a blast of flame, Flying Dragon accelerated through the sky while resuming its vigorous maneuvers. Despite the crippling injuries, Doroteo knew the Dragon would not last if they could not find a way to dislodge the Demon God on its back. At the risk of spontaneous destruction, Flying Dragon increased its violent thrashing.

Doroteo and the entire crew gritted their teeth as the loud groaning and creaking of the Flying Dragon entered their ears. At the same time, they remained steadfast as their bodies were assaulted by the incredible force generated by the Dragon's twist and turns.

"The Demon God will not take this lying down... we must find a way to win before its retaliation!"

The Demon God was likely debilitated by the same severe forces. However, even if they managed to temporarily disable the Demon God, the Demon God was certain to restart its rampage once the Flying Dragon stopped.

While struggling to find their hope of victory, Doroteo was soon presented with a new problem.

"...Oh no!"

A single Levitate Ship came to view. It was not a ship flying Žaloudekian colors, but the companion to the Death God. It was the Aerial Assault Ship.

"Not only the Demon God, but that Levitate Ship as well... even for the Flying Dragon..."

Doroteo had a terrible premonition. With the arrival of a new enemy, the Flying Dragon's Etheric Levitator was certain to be destroyed, and the Dragon would crash onto the ground below. Doroteo could almost sense death looming nearby, waiting for its eventual feast.

The Flying Dragon was built with incredible dexterity with its countless joints sewn together with strand crystal. It swiftly turned in place, revealing its flank to the approaching Aerial Assault Ship. Despite losing all its Anculosas at the helm, the Flying Dragon still had a functioning contingent of Anculosas at the lower deck. With line of sight clear, the Anculosas unleashed a hail of shots

toward the Aerial Assault Ship.

As the shots landed on the approaching ship, Aerial Assault Ship slowed down its advance, providing the Flying Dragon with valuable time.

“Our Dragon’s life is at its end. I hate to admit it, but the Demon God had won.” Doroteo muttered to himself.

The Flying Dragon could not reply to Doroteo, but the creaking sound from the damaged frame sounded almost like a pained cry. The Flying Dragon had half of its Anculosas taken out by Javelins, its powerful claws severed, and its proud flames proved useless. Even if the Flying Dragon still had the mana output to maintain the fight, it no longer had a weapon to counter the Demon God, not to mention the Aerial Assault Ship prowling in the distance.

Heralded as the vanguard of the sky, Levitate Ships were the world’s first viable combat airships. Among which, the Flying Dragon, designed as a powerful counter to the anti-air javelins, was in a class all by itself. With powerful claws that could cleave Silhouette Knights with ease, and a flame that consumed all that dared to stand before it, the Flying Dragon was destined to dominate the skies.

In their era, the Flying Dragon Battleship was indisputably a technological marvel and should have reigned the skies for decades to come... that is, if it weren’t for the existence called the Demon God.

“However, I will not meekly hand you your victory. If we simply give up, how could we face the valiant Žaloudekian army fighting below?”

Hearing Doroteo’s words, gasps were heard through the numerous voicepipes. Certainly, the moment the Flying Dragon fell, the Demon God would be free to descend upon the Žaloudekian army below. In the minds of the surviving crew, no existence could stand against the Demon God, and the Žaloudekian army was sure to perish alongside the Flying Dragon.

The guardian dragon was the protector of the Kingdom of Žaloudek. The weapon of immense power was now littered with injuries and only moments away from certain destruction. If the Žaloudekian army were to suffer a crushing defeat, even Princess Catalina was sure to perish in the ensuing chaos.

Despite the hopelessness of the situation, Doroteo could not let such misfortune befall upon the ones he wish to protect and, with all his remaining will, steeled his resolve.

“We could not simply give up. If we do, how could we face the late Prince Cristóbal... and Princess Catalina? Even if we were to perish, let us strike at the heart of the Kuschepercans! Alert the signalers and let them announce our resolve!!”

With the flashes of light, the crew aboard the Flying Dragon transmitted their resolve to the Žaloudekian army below.

“I, Doroteo Mardones, will not let our death be meaningless!”

With words that bordered insanity, Doroteo channeled all the remaining energy to propulsion, and the Flying Dragon began to accelerate at an incredible pace. It no longer tried to dislodge the Demon God latched onto its back, nor worried about the frame that was slowly coming apart. The Flying Dragon simply accelerated and descended.

Even Eru could do little but endure the sudden acceleration. With crushing g-forces pressing down upon him, Eru could not help but be baffled by the Dragon’s decision to ignore his presence.

“It would have no chance at victory or escape if it could not throw Ikaruga off its back. So what is it up to-... Ah!”

As Eru gazed ahead, the Flying Dragon’s intentions were slowly becoming clear, and, for the first time since the start of the battle, Eru revealed a complicated expression. At the end of its acceleration was a massive Kuschepercan standard – the Kuschepercan field headquarters.

“The Queen! As long as we take out the Queen, the rebels will lose their cause! This way, even if the Dragon were to perish, Kingdom of Žaloudek will survive!!” Doroteo loudly declared.

With all its remaining mana, the Flying Dragon pushed its flame propulsion to the limits. Shards of metal and crystal continued to chip off from the surface, and the Dragon seemed to be barely held together. Doroteo neither cared to activate the claw nor the dragonbreath and, with a singular will, sought to use

the crippled Dragon's body for its final strike. His intent was to turn the smoldering wreck into a hammer of judgment to be brought upon on the Kuschepercan field headquarters. As such, Doroteo continued his advance without a concern.

"I... won't let you!!"

Certainly, Eru would not stay idly by.

Despite the limited time, Eru deemed Ikaruga's destructive capability to be sufficient to bring the Flying Dragon Battleship down. With its frame reinforced with magic to resist the crushing forces, Ikaruga aimed its Sword Cannons at the center of the ship. As long as Ikaruga could destroy the Etheric Levitator, the Flying Dragon would prematurely crash into the ground.

Moments before Eru commenced his bombardment, a single shot flew toward Ikaruga. With ease, Ikaruga deflected the shot aimed at its torso.

"Seriously, why continue this pointless struggle?"

The statue of the Dragon Knight fired the shot. Despite the crushing acceleration, Doroteo was still able to accurately aim the shot at Ikaruga, a clear reflection of his skill as a knight runner.

"Hahaha... accursed Demon God, while I could not defeat you, I will not let you torment my people! In our remaining time together, I hope you will keep me company and not interfere with our resolve."

The Dragon Knight unloaded shot after shot on the Demon God. While all of the shots were harmlessly deflected, Doroteo did not seem to mind, as his objective was to keep the Demon God occupied from interfering. On the other hand, Ikaruga could not bear with Doroteo's delaying tactics as time slowly ticks away.

"Seriously, why won't you just die quietly! Don't think you could keep Ikaruga occupied by something as petty as this!"

While blocking shots, Ikaruga steadied its stance with support from Rahu's Fists. With thrusters perpendicular to the Dragon, Ikaruga activated its propulsion. Fed by the mana from two massive reactors, the thrusters pushed strongly against the Flying Dragon, and it didn't take long for the Dragon to start

shaking from the irreconcilable force.

“To think you would still find a way to obstruct us! However, if it’s just shaking...”

Doroteo could barely resist the massive force bearing down on the Flying Dragon from above, and the Dragon was becoming incredibly difficult to control. With his attention divided between firing at the Death God and piloting the Flying Dragon, Doroteo did his best to maintain the course.



From the Kuschepercan field headquarters, the sight of an unsteady Flying Dragon soon came into view.

“Your Majesty, there! The F-Flying Dragon is falling!”

The jubilation of the Guards was soon overtaken by horror. Certainly, the destruction of a powerful foe was worthy of celebration, but it was a different matter if the wreckage were to fall upon them. Even the crash of a standard Levitate Ship would cause massive damage to its surroundings, to say nothing of the catastrophic damage from the crash of the significantly larger Dragon. If by chance it were to land upon them, the Guards were certain to share the Dragon’s fate.

” Is it planning to crash into us? Quickly, have the Queen moved to a safe location!”

Although they had the intent, the Guards were unsure where they could possibly move the Queen to keep her safe. Other than the panicking Guards, Isadora, who sat behind Eleonora in Kartoga Ol Cauchard Secundus, also turned deadly pale at the approaching Dragon.

“Eleonora, what should we do? If we do not get away, then...”

“Where could we possibly go? At that speed, it is already too late for us to evade.”

With how violently the Flying Dragon was shaking, it was impossible to predict where it would crash. Not to mention, they were unlikely to escape from the fast approaching Dragon with the limited mobility of Secundus.

One thing was certain, Eleonora's designated knight was on the Levitate Ship chasing after the Flying Dragon.

"...I know you will definitely protect me. If even you could not stop the Dragon, I am certain nobody can." With her hands clasped, Eleonora gazed upon the sky.



"Open Ether valves! Do not overthink it! We should be good as long as we ram that bastard from the side! Thrusters to full, get that mana burning!"

"Boss, the thrusters are already operating at their maximum power!"

Boss shouted loudly from the helm, with Batson tightly gripping the wheel. They were frantically trying to match the Flying Dragon in altitude while pumping all their available mana into the thrusters. Thanks to Ikaruga's efforts, the Flying Dragon Battleship was slowing down, allowing the Aerial Assault Ship to close the distance.

"Time to stop that bastard! Chid, let's do this!"

"Yeah! I won't let it gets its way!"

Within the two Tzendrinbles, the twins activated the Multiple Launch Javelin System. With their modified Javelins exhausted in the initial engagement, they only had standard Javelins at their disposal.

The Javelins flew straight at the Flying Dragon. Occupied by the fight against Demon God and the control of the Flying Dragon, Doroteo did not have the spare capability to dodge the approaching Javelins.

The target was quite large, so the Javelins had little problem finding their way onto the Flying Dragon and pierced into its body. Yet, despite sustaining a massive barrage of Javelins, the Flying Dragon showed little change in its course. It was well armored interior helped to mitigate the concentrated strike and prevented any crippling damage to its key components.

"H-how? It is not stopping! D-darn it!" Addy cried out in disbelief.

The Flying Dragon remained staunchly on course for the Kuschepercan field headquarters, and time was quickly running out.

“J-just a little more! We have almost caught up! Is there any way...”

The Aerial Assault Ship had finally caught up to the Flying Dragon Battleship, but the difference in speed between the two was negligible, so the Aerial Assault Ship was at a loss with what to do.

“On the Dragon’s back... It’s Ikaruga!!”

Chid noticed the pillars of flame on the Flying Dragon’s back, and at its base was a lone Silhouette Knight parrying shot after shot. It didn’t take long for Chid to understand what was happening; Ikaruga was using its thrusters to delay the Flying Dragon, while trying its best to derail the Dragon’s plan.

Chid suddenly had a thought. If he could defeat the enemy unit, Ikaruga would be free to unleash a barrage upon the Flying Dragon. More than anyone, Chid knew Ikaruga’s terrifying firepower, and, as long as the deterrence was gone, the Flying Dragon would not last long under the concentrated bombardment. However, Chid had just recently fired all of the Javelins, and reloading would take too long.

Looking around, Chid desperately tried to find a weapon that could reach the Flying Dragon, and, in his panic, his eyes fell upon a large lance nearby.

“Ahaha, I think I have a way, but I am going to be kicking myself later for this.” Chid joked as he let out a deep sigh.

It didn’t take long for Chid to commit to his plan. Chid immediately disconnected the tethers and slowly had the Tzendrinble stand up. Picking up the nearby lance, Chid dashed across the top deck of the Aerial Assault Ship.

“Hey, Chid? What are you doing?! If you leave, I won’t be able to keep up the mana by myself!”

“Sorry! Please try holding on for now. I will need to go smack that Dragon and make it slow down.”

Chid’s Tzendrinble lowered its stance as power gathered at its soles, and Addy immediately knew what Chid was planning.

“Oooh!!”

Before Addy could protest, Tzendrinble took off and, with a loud roar, leapt

from the edge of the deck. The distance between the two Ships was not far, and Tzendrinble was able to gently land on the back of the Dragon.

“W-who is it? Not that it matters. Anyone coming over from that Levitate Ship is certain to be an enemy. Either way, you will not get in the ways of our plan!”

The sudden arrival of an interloper surprised Doroteo, but it did not take long for Doroteo to regain his usual calm. Doroteo’s plan was simple enough that there was no need for any hesitation. On the other hand, Eru was shocked by the unexpected reinforcement.

“Tzendrinble? Which one? Rather, why are you over here?”

“Is it not obvious? I am here to beat that bastard down! Eru, I will leave the rest to you...”

With that said, Chid charged toward the Dragon Knight. At the charge, Doroteo had to respond and turned his shots on Chid. Under the hail of shots, Chid tried his best to block with his lance and shield. However, some shots easily sneaked through his defense and punched into Tzendrinble. Despite the mounting injuries, Chid was unfazed in his charge toward the Dragon Knight.

“Just a little more! Tzendrinble, let’s do this!!”

“Don’t get in my way!!”

At the fast approaching Tzendrinble, the Dragon Knight could finally no longer divide its focus and unloaded all the remaining shots. However, it was already too late, and Tzendrinble’s lance stabbed deep into the stationary Dragon Knight.

“D-darn it!”

With a lance firmly lodged into the Dragon Knight’s torso, the cockpit was completely pierced through. Inside, the half-crushed Doroteo looked at the lance in shock as he coughed up blood.

“Ugh, Y-Your Excellency... Looks like I won’t be a bearer of good news.” With that said, the famed Doroteo Mardones breathed his last.

Having lost its will, the Flying Dragon began to slow down as the flame propulsion sputtered out.

“Oooh! The youngsters did it! It’s our turn now, ram it!”

Before Boss was able to finish his order, the Aerial Assault Ship had already turned to ram the Flying Dragon, pushing the Dragon away from its collision course.

“Ugh, how worrisome. I wonder how long we can keep this up with a single Tzendrinble...”

As the Aerial Assault Ship hungrily consumed mana to feed its thrusters, the remaining Tzendrinble was clearly inadequate to keep up with the voracious demand. Addy looked on anxiously as the mana reserves were rapidly depleting, before a familiar shadow flew over.

“...Eru!”

With the destruction of the Dragon Knight by Chid’s powerful charge, Eru was quick to spring into action.

“Chid did say to leave the rest to me~”

Landing on the Aerial Assault Ship, Ikaruga immediately shot out Rahu’s Fists to reconnect itself to the silver nerves. Through the connections, Ikaruga began pumping massive amount of mana to supply the Aerial Assault Ship, instantly amplifying its acceleration.

“Žaloudekian Dragon, it is time for you to scoot out of the way!”

The Aerial Assault Ship pushed the Flying Dragon away from the Kuschepercan formation and turned it to the Tetraspides Fortresses. With Doroteo dead, there was no one left to command the Dragon, and the Dragon could only meekly bend to the will of Eru. As the two approached the Tetraspides Fortresses, Ikaruga raised its Sword Cannons for the last time and unleashed a terrifying bombardment.

Ikaruga’s shots tore through the trunk of the Flying Dragon. As the Flying Dragon became engulfed in flame, the structure slowly unraveled and the Anculosas were consumed by explosion one after another. Even the Etheric Levitator was not spared from the fate, and, with its passing, the massive Flying Dragon began to fall toward the ground.

“Ah, it seemed the situation has turned a tad problematic.”

Sitting in the cockpit of the Tzendrinble, Chid felt the shifting gravity as the Dragon plummeted toward the ground. With the lance still lodged in the Dragon Knight, Chid felt a tinge of regret for his reckless behavior. After all, Tzendrinble couldn't fly.

As he savored his last moment before embracing the ground with the Dragon, Chid saw an approaching Silhouette Knight in the corner of his eye.

“Chid! Forget about the Silhouette Knight and jump over here!”

Ikaruga flew over after delivering its final blow on the Flying Dragon and landed near Tzendrinble. At Eru's word, Chid unhesitantly leapt out from the cockpit.

As the strong winds washed over Chid, Ikaruga reached out with its hands.

“...Gotcha!”

With Ikaruga's dexterous control of the thrusters, Eru managed to carefully catch Chid before he was blown away. Ikaruga then kicked off from the Dragon and returned to the air, before safely landing back on the Aerial Assault Ship.

“...Seriously, how reckless could you be?”

Ikaruga opened its hands, and, from within, Chid emerged with an exhausted smile and mangled hair.

“It's not reckless! There just weren't many options available at the time. Either way, Eru, sorry for losing the Tzendrinble.”

Behind Ikaruga, the flying dragon fell faster and faster without the support of the Etheric Levitator. The Tzendrinble still aboard would certainly not survive the impact with the ground below.

At that moment, the cockpit of Ikaruga opened up, and Eru made his way next to Chid. There, Eru reached out with his hands and patted the exhausted Chid on the head.

“I am not angry at your efforts: it's just that what you did was quite dangerous, and I hope you will never do something like that in the future. As far as Tzendrinble is concerned, we can always build a second one. The important

thing is that you are safe and sound.”

With a loud explosion, the flying dragon smashed into the ground below.



From inside the Tetraspides Fortresses, the remaining garrison stared in shock at the sky.

Above them, the smoldering carcass of their guardian dragon fell ominously toward them. The Žaloudekian army was in a complete state of panic, but they had no time to run for cover as the massive fireball came crashing down on them.

In a blazing inferno, the Flying Dragon smashed into the ground. Without the reinforcement magic to support its structure, the behemoth collapsed into itself in a smoldering wreck. On the other hand, the black knights caught in the blast shared the Dragon’s fate. Despite Tyrantor’s impressive defenses, all was for naught before the catastrophic explosion.

With this, the Jade Dragon Knights held in reserve were sent to the afterlife alongside the Dragon.



As the battle drew to an end, the Aerial Assault Ship turned off its propulsion and calmly floated in the skies above. At the top deck, a small shadow went up to Eru and Chid as they observed the fireworks below.

“Ah! It’s not fair that only Chid gets praised! Other people were working quite hard as well!!”

From inside the remaining Tzendrinble, Addy leapt out from the cockpit and, with a slight physical reinforcement magic, joined Eru and Chid on Ikaruga’s hand. The moment she arrived, Addy grabbed Eru and hugged him from behind. Only until Eru gave her a satisfactory pat did she release Eru.

Soon, the rest of the jubilant crew came to join the trio on the deck. As the members of the Silver Phoenix knights celebrated their hard won victory, the Aerial Assault Ship made its way back to the Kuschepercan camp.

Chapter 47: Liberation of Delvincourt

The destruction of the mighty Flying Dragon Battleship created a lull in the combat as many turned to the fiery spectacle. The Flying Dragon was not just any Levitate Ship. It existed both as the greatest threat to the Kuschepercans and the indisputable guardian of the Žaloudekians. As such, between the two, the death of the Dragon came as a greater shock for the Žaloudekians.

On the Cauderlier Plains, where the sound of war died down, a clear voice ran out from the Kuschepercan Queen.

“Brave knights of Kuscheperca, now lies the greatest opportunity for us to reclaim the Tetraspides Fortresses once and for all!”

Eleonora’s declaration spread like a wildfire among the Kuschepercan rank, and, with their renewed vigor, prepared for an assault on the panicked Žaloudekian army. After numerous close calls, the Kuschepercan has finally commanded a clear path to victory. With unshakable morale, the Kuschepercans readied their weapons.

“All forces, advance! Onward, to our capital!”

With the King’s Mount in the lead, the whole of the Kuschepercan army advanced on the Žaloudekian positions. The long stalemate between the two has finally broken as the advantage swung decidedly to the Kuschepercans. Unlike the Kuschepercans, who charged ahead with an unstoppable momentum, the Žaloudekians no longer had a capable commander to rally the despairing troops. One after another, the black knights fell to the Kuschepercan assault. One after another, the Levitate Ships high above were shot down by volleys of javelins. It was only a matter of time before the whole of Žaloudekian army perished on the Cauderlier Plains.

“D-darn it... S-sound the retreat! We have lost the day! Save your units for the next battle!!”

The Žaloudekian army no longer had the stopping power, with a large part due to the Žaloudekians having lost their strategic reserve alongside the death of the Flying Dragon. As the Žaloudekians started to rout, many of the survivors

who were not fortunate enough to escape were cut down as they fled. Soon, the colors of New Kuscheperca flew above the Tetraspides Fortresses, proudly fluttering in the wind.

The routed Žaloudekians no longer had any semblance of an army as they fled for their lives. It was clear to everyone that the Kuschepercans had won the day.

“Chase after the Žaloudekians! Do not let a single one of them escape and cut them all down! Long live New Kuscheperca! Long live the Queen!!”

As the Kuschepercans rose up in cheer, the war had finally left the Cauderlier Plains.

With Revantiers at their core, the Kuschepercans followed closely behind the shattered Žaloudekians, all the way down the road to Delvincourt.

The loss of the old capital Delvincourt was the start of the Great Western Storm. It not only signified the fall of the Kingdom of Kuscheperca, but also represented its replacement by the Žaloudekian rule. As such, the liberation of Delvincourt was both the personal wish of Queen Eleonora, and the collective desire of every Kuschepercan.

With the Silver Phoenix Knights’ third company at the vanguard, the first and second company loaded up for transport, and the Kuschepercan Revantiers following closely behind, the Kuschepercan army did not show the slightest exhaustion as they chased the fleeing Žaloudekians toward the capital.

“Now! Charge through their defenses, and open the path forward!”

“Advance! Revenge for our late commander Edgar!”

“Hey! The Silhouette Knight aside, I am perfectly alive and well!”

Despite their lighthearted banter, the Silver Phoenix Knight did not relent in their assault. Faced with the overwhelming power, the Žaloudekian defenders simply melted away.

In Delvincourt, Silhouette Knights were scrambling to escape as the Kuschepercan standard slowly approached. The surviving Levitate Ships took off one after another and turned to the safety of the west. Delvincourt lacked any

meaningful defense, and the black knights woefully lacked the numbers to face the might of the Kuschepercans. When the Tetraspides Fortresses were lost, the Žaloudekians no longer had any staying power within central Kuscheperca.

“...Looks like we were defeated.”

Princess Catalina sat motionless on the throne as she gazed out at the fleeing Levitate Ships. At that moment, a single person hastily came before the throne.

“Your Excellency! The Tetraspides Fortresses has fallen, and the Jade Dragon Knights are in full retreat! The Kuschepercan army will soon reach the gates. Your Excellency, Please make your escape as soon as possible!!”

Despite the worrying report, Princess Catalina did not stir at his words. Her inaction only further amplified the subordinate’s anxiety, almost to the point of forcing the princess to evacuate.

However, with a loud explosion, the subordinate froze. It was the recently departed Levitate Ship. Before it has made far from the Delvincourt airspace, the Levitate Ship came crashing down in a smoldering ball of flame.

The reason was obvious. It was a certain Silhouette Knight that roared across the sky, bellowing a trail of fire. With the Flying Dragon gone, the Demon God was now unchallenged in the sky. Leaping from Levitate Ship to Levitate Ship, the Demon God sank them with painful efficiency.

“...It’s useless. With the Dragon’s loss, our deaths are already set in stone.”

Princess Catalina had realized the moment she saw the destruction of the Dragon. Against such an overwhelming existence, there was simply no escape.



With Resvant Vidos holding the walls, and the Revantiers lining the road, the King’s Mount, Kartoga Ol Cauchard Secundus marched through Delvincourt’s massive gates.

“...Father, I have finally returned.”

The Silver Phoenix Knights were now in full control of the area around Delvincourt. As such, the Kuschepercans and their King’s Mount could march peacefully through the gates. The banners that lined the main roads had all

been replaced by the advancing troops to Kuschepercan colors, in a bid to declare the return of the Kuschepercan regime.

“Delvincourt was originally the seat of the Žaloudekian viceroyalty, and, as such, was governed by Žaloudekian royalty. Now that we have retaken Delvincourt, I had hoped to meet one of the Žaloudekian royals.”

The surrounding guards could not help but stir at Eleonora’s statement. After witnessing the Žaloudekian invasion and the death of the previous king firsthand, they were unsure what would happen if the Queen were to meet their royal.

In a victory, Kuscheperca has to act in a way befitting the victor. If they had captured an enemy royal, they would need to decide the treatment. After all, as with the Kingdom of Kuscheperca, the Kingdom of Žaloudek also relied on their bloodline to rule. As long as they have their hand on a Žaloudekian royal, the Kuschepercans would be at an advantage in the ensuing negotiations.

“Your Majesty, you must not act rashly.”

“I understand.”

Walking in the middle of its bodyguards, Kartoga Ol Cauchard Secundus has finally reached the front of the castle.

In the courtyard, the group descended from their Silhouette Knight and were greeted by Dietrich and Nora in Silhouette Gears. The two removed their Silhouette Gears and knelt before Queen Eleonora.

“We have been awaiting your arrival. The captured Žaloudekian royal rests in the audience chamber.”

“Thank you, I will immediately head over there.”

Queen Eleonora walked at the center of the armed bodyguards as they made their way down the deserted hallways on foot. To them, it was a familiar setting, as even with the change in ownership, the layout of the rooms remained the same. Without making a single wrong turn, the entourage found their way to the audience chamber.

The audience chamber was filled with the Silhouette Gears of the Blue Hawk

Knights. They kept alert as they encircled the throne. On the throne sat an astute-looking female, who remained calm and collected despite being surrounded by imposing Silhouette Gears that could crush her on a whim.

As Queen Eleonora entered the chamber, the Silhouette Gears parted to the sides to make a path. Meeting the Žaloudekian royal, Eleonora waved off the nearby Silhouette Gears to make room.

“...So you are the daughter of the King of Žaloudek, King Bartolomeo.”

“Yes, Your Majesty. I am the crown princess of the Kingdom of Žaloudek, Catalina.”

Princess Catalina did not have the slightest air of a defeated ruler. Sitting on the throne, Catalina displayed no fear, but remained dignified as her eyes met Eleonora’s. It was a scene that easily misrepresented the power dynamic in play.

If it was still the previous Eleonora, she would likely be overpowered by Catalina’s presence. However, now as the Queen, and after enduring many trials to return to Delvincourt, Eleonora was no longer the naive flower.

“I have only one question for you. When we were close to breaching the city, have you never thought of escape?” Without breaking eye contact, Eleonora asked the seated Catalina.

“Escape is pointless... You should know very well. Even a child knows the ending that befall the attempting Levitate Ships.”

At that moment, a loud burst of flame could be heard as the six-armed Demon God descended upon the courtyard.

“With the Demon God, how could you possibly expect me to escape? Delvincourt had already been under its grip. Even if I try to escape, I will be easily caught.”

Eleonora slowly approached the throne without a hint of hesitation as Catalina answered her question. Nearby, the bodyguards were on their toes and carefully watched the scene unfolding. As Eleonora made her way up the final steps, Catalina voluntarily stood up and stepped aside.

“One who was defeated could no longer have the privilege to sit on this throne. I return this to you, Your Majesty.”

Eleonora, on the other hand, did not immediately take her seat, but stared attentively at Catalina.

“...You will be treated as a prisoner of war. In future negotiations, I will count on you to serve your role. As such, we will afford you the treatment worthy of a royal.”

“I am rather surprised. Do you not plan to have me killed? After all, I am among those responsible for the death of your father.”

Despite talking about her own death, Catalina carried the conversation with a lighthearted air, even revealing a slight smile on her face. Yet, Eleonora could see in Catalina’s eyes an indomitable will, as if judging Eleonora for her capacity as a sovereign.

“...As far as what Žaloudek had done, I have my own thoughts on the matter. However, as the Queen of Kuscheperca, my actions will determine the fate of the kingdom. In my capacity as the Queen, I simply deemed that having you alive for future negotiations will be more advantageous to the kingdom.”

Hearing Queen Eleonora’s words, Princess Catalina nodded in agreement.

“As you wish. I had already been mentally prepared for the worst. This loss dealt a crippling blow to the Kingdom of Žaloudek. As such, it is in my kingdom’s best interest to avoid further escalations in this conflict, and I believe your kingdom carries the same intention.”

With everything said, the nearby knights came up to Princess Catalina and escorted her away from the audience chamber. For the foreseeable future, Princess Catalina would be kept under arrest until the conclusion of peace.

After Catalina had left the room, Eleonora finally turned toward the throne.

Over a year since the death and defeat of the late King Augusti, the throne of Kuscheperca has finally returned to its Queen.



During the Kuschepercan’s final push on Delvincourt, one Levitate Ship

secretly departed from an airship dock near Delvincourt. It was not a Levitate Ship of particular note, and it even lacked the usual contingent of Anculosas aboard. The heavily armed Levitate Ships of the Jade Dragon Knights had already departed for the final battle on Cauderlier Plains. As such, the unarmed Levitate Ship did not number among the Jade Dragon Knights. The one who sat at the helm was a laid-back man.

“...Chief knightsmith, are you sure we should depart at this time? D-Delvincourt remained firmly in our hands, and Princess Catalina still holds command. Not to mention, the signal fires from the Tetraspides Fortresses-...” One of the crew asked the man at the helm.

Faced with the question, the man only looked sheepishly at his crew. It was the Chief knightsmith of the Kingdom of Žaloudek – Horacio Collazo. As always, Horatio remained shoddily dressed, and did not have the air befitting his station.

“Haa... I believe that signal is real. Sadly, the Kuschepercans will be reclaiming their capital. Do you have a desire to stay and fight to the death?” Horatio glared at the crew member.

“N-no, that was not my intention.”

The man shirked back at Horacio’s stern tone. Seeing his subordinate’s reluctance for escape, Horacio could only let out a long sigh.

“Us technical staff have no role in the combat to come. Although some may slander us with our willingness to abandon our allies, our first duty is to bring the fruits of our research and experiences back home. This way, our nation will be able to adequately respond to any future threats. It is a plan that Princess Catalina would surely support.”

Horacio’s logic was sound. However, even if defeat was certain, his crew do wonder why Horacio did not show even the slightest remorse as the first to flee. Not to mention, everyone knew Horacio gravely valued his life, so his words lacked a certain authenticity to them.

“Granted, the defeat this time will be quite the crippling blow. How everything plays out will ultimately depend on Prince Carlitos.”

In his mind, the well-chiseled face of Prince Carlitos surfaced. At that moment, Horacio knew that, given their national power, a repeat invasion of Kuscheperca was nigh impossible. As such, even Horacio had few ideas as to how the regent would tackle the ensuing diplomatic scuffle.

Sitting at the helm, Horacio suddenly leapt up in excitement.

“Our army had the Flying Dragon Battleship, my greatest masterpiece! Although it was a rushed construction, who could have possibly imagined it beaten? Has it really been defeated?”

Horacio’s mouth curled up into a dreadful smile. Unlike his words, Horacio’s voice did not carry the same sense of loss, but rather one of excitement.

“In the end, reaching the skies is harder than I thought. However, none of this was a waste, and we had gained valuable experience through its loss!”

Horacio continued to mumble as his gaze turned below deck and toward the hanger that held the crystallization of his research. While the research served as insurance for his early departure from Delvincourt, Horacio himself also did not wish for his research to be lost, and, in turn, prompted his escape.

Not to mention, with his untimely escape, Horacio was likely to be punished for abandoning Princess Catalina. To avoid such a fate, Horacio thought to bring some ‘welcome gift’, and these research served as the perfect gift.

“Our work is not over, and the path for me to reign over the skies is still far in the future. However, one day, I shall create the greatest Battleship. Let this be a valuable lesson for the time to come.”

As the humming of the wind turbine disappeared alongside Horacio’s Levitate Ship, thick clouds rolled over Delvincourt, blanketing the clear skies in a thick layer of gray.

Before long, rain fell upon the battlefield, washing away the flames of war.



With the most recent report, all the nobles present could only hold their breath.

At the capital of Žaloudek, Crown Prince and Regent Carlitos Emden Žaloudek

listened to the report on Kuscheperca. His well-chiseled face clearly twisted from anger.

“...After the loss of Delvincourt, rebellion broke out all over Kuscheperca. New Kuscheperca remained largely silent after their victory and had only sent small forces out to assist the local rebellions. Second Prince Cristóbal had died in combat, and Crown Princess Catalina had fell into enemy hands. The morale of our forces are beyond salvage, and the troops are in full retreat...”

With every report that found its way to Žaloudek, Carlitos’ brows would furrow to an ever greater degree. His usual cool manners, when combined with his silent fuming, created an unbearable pressure on his surroundings.

“How? Hasn’t Kuscheperca already been annexed? At most, I have received the report that a lone princess managed to escape from captivity. How, then, did our army suffered such a crippling defeat? As security, I even had the Flying Dragon sent to assist!!”

The reversal in Kuscheperca was sudden and unexpected.

Despite Žaloudek’s decade-long preparation for its reunification, New Kuschepercan only took mere weeks to bridge the technological gap. With new Silhouette Knight models, the Kuschepercans erased the advantage the Žaloudekian black knights afforded them. Moreover, Žaloudek had lost most of its Levitate Ships, and even the Flying Dragon Battleship could not avoid such a fate.

Worse still, with the death of the Second Prince, and the capture of the Crown Princess, the Žaloudekian Reunification Army lacked a proper leader. Carlitos understood perfectly that any attempt on Kuscheperca would now be a fruitless endeavor.

The strength of the black knights made it hard for anyone to rationalize the defeat, and the loss in materiel was beyond Žaloudek’s ability to cope. The more Carlitos thought about their current predicament, the more uneasy he became.

However, the bad news did not seem to end.

“Your Excellency, the Eastern Flag of the Eleven Flags had begun to marshal

their forces at our southwestern border. We have also detected suspicious movements on our northern border. If the surrounding nations invade, we will likely not be able to hold with the Lead Bone Knights alone.”

“One after another! To think they would pounce at the slightest weakness... Hyenas, the whole lot of them!” Carlitos erupted as his anger finally reached a boiling point.

In a surprisingly short amount of time, the reversal in Kuscheperca had brought a huge change to the regional power dynamics, and the winds have turned against Žaloudek.

“They think we are on our last throes and thought to take a bite? It seemed that we need to put them in their place!”

“However, Your Excellency, our forces are already stretched too thin. Even if recall our army in Kuscheperca...”

The Kingdom of New Kuscheperca’s recent victory had already spread like a wildfire. Many of the neighboring nations had already mustered their forces to take advantage of the chaos.

Initially, many of the neighboring nations preferred to simply observe the situation, as the Žaloudekian army held an overwhelming superiority. Even though Kuscheperca was defeated, other nations didn’t immediately seize the initiative, since doing so would make the black knights their enemy. Having troops spread between occupied and home territory tend to thin out the defenses, yet, Žaloudek at the start of the reunification had enough power to not compromise either.

At the same time, the other nations could also not carve their own territory from the remnant of Kuscheperca, as they worried that any hard-earned territory would soon be retaken by the black knights. In the end, the surrounding nations could do nothing as Žaloudek took over Kuscheperca.

However, with the sudden reversal, in which Žaloudek suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Kuscheperca, the other nations no longer needed to worry about the now shattered black knights, and one after another, sought a bite on the wounded beast.

“W-why... why did this happen?!”

On that day, at the center of the Žaloudekian Capital, Regent Carlitos Emden Žaloudek collapsed from excessive shock.

Since then, Žaloudekian borders began to weaken. At first, there were only minor incursions, but soon, the surrounding nations turned to outright invasion.

Despite the worsening situation, Žaloudek’s Lead Bone Knights fought bravely against the countless invaders from all corners of the vast kingdom. However, overwhelmed by their sheer numbers, the Lead Bone Knights could only fight a fighting retreat as more and more land was taken by their enemies.

Yet, on this terrible battlefield, one group of Silhouette Knights were able to hold the lines and threw back multiple assaults.

“Haa... So in the end, only I survived.”

It was a rapid response group carved from the survivors of Kuscheperca. The group was led by an oddly-shaped Silhouette Knight armed with countless ‘swords’.

“Very well, I guess I shall take up their share of the fight.”

With their fragile and deteriorating situation at home, Žaloudek could not help but abandon their ambition to reunite the fragmented nations.



Kingdom of New Kuscheperca’s capital, Delvincourt – originally the seat of the Žaloudekian viceroyalty, the capital had now seen better days since its reclamation by New Kuscheperca.

The chain of defeats from the Tetraspides Fortresses to Delvincourt had lost Žaloudek both the largest metropolis in the region and their commander, Princess Catalina. Additional, with the situation deteriorating rapidly at home, the Žaloudekians could not help but retreat from Kuscheperca.

Since then, the Kingdom of New Kuscheperca declared the relocation of their capital from Fontaine to Delvincourt. The whole kingdom was in celebration as the citizens welcomed the return of capital and their Queen. Despite the losses they suffered during the long war, the Kuschepercans now looked once more to

the future.

On a certain day, at a dock near Delvincourt. Queen Eleonora, accompanied by Martina, Isadora, and the Kuschepercan nobility, watched over the Silver Phoenix Knights as they loaded their supplies aboard their Levitate Ship – the Aerial Assault Ship.

“Still, with this ship around, transporting supplies got a whole lot easier. Hey, Silver Boy, let us keep this ship with the Silver Phoenix Knights!”

Boss had a bright smile plastered over his face as he gazed upon the Aerial Assault Ship. Since the battle, the Multiple Launch Javelin Systems have been removed, and the Aerial Assault Ship returned to a lightly-armed Levitate Ship meant for transportation.

The Aerial Assault Ship was packed to the brim, with a large part containing the cores and parts of the Žaloudekian Silhouette Knights.

“Oh? Are you sure you want to hide this ship from Gramps?”

“He is free to look, but we definitely won’t hand it over. This ship is our spoils of war!”

“Looks like you have grown attached to this ship. Although, we could always construct a new ship from what we learned... but, either way, it shouldn’t be a problem.”

Batson and Eru looked at each other before shaking their heads. Having commanded the Aerial Assault Ship in war, Boss seemed to have developed a special attachment. The first ‘Aerial Knightsmith’ seemed to be leaning toward a suspicious direction.

As the Silver Phoenix Knights finished loading their supplies, Eleonora turned to Emrys.

“...Looks like you plan to return to Fremmevira.”

“That’s right. With the Queen back in the capital, and the Žaloudekians removed from Kuscheperca, there is little reason for us combat specialists to remain. As far as the restoration is concerned, it is a matter for Kuscheperca and her Queen.”

On that day, the Silver Phoenix Knights planned to return to the Kingdom of Fremmevira, and Eleonora was here to see them off.

Among the nobility, there were many who wished for the Silver Phoenix Knights to remain in Kuscheperca. After all, the Silver Phoenix Knights have rendered a great service to their cause, and, during the restoration, every little bit of military power was necessary to maintain order.

However, Silver Phoenix Knights were still an expeditionary force on loan from the Kingdom of Fremmevira. As such, they could not remain indefinitely in Kuscheperca. With the immediate goals of defeating the occupying Žaloudek force, their service was complete. Still, the same cannot be said for its individual members.

Among the loaded supplies was a wrangled wreck of a Silhouette Knight, beyond any recognition, but had parts that greatly exceeded a normal model. It was the Tzendrinble that fell alongside the Flying Dragon.

“Chid...-san.” Eleonora called out to the young Knight Runner staring at the wreck.

Hearing the voice, Chid immediately turned around. Despite standing right in front of him, Eleonora closed her mouth without saying another word, as if she reverted to the sheltered princess from a long time ago.

Chid wasn't sure at first how to respond. After gathering his thoughts, Chid turned once more to Eleonora.

“I... am a member of the Silver Phoenix Knights, and I will need to return with my companions. I am... sorry that I could not keep my promise from that time.”

At his answer, Eleonora turned downcast and, after a slight tremble, clasped her hands together.

“N-no... I understand. Know that you had helped me... and gave me strength... in my time of greatest need. As my designated knight, you have accomplished your task wonderfully.”

As Eleonora finished, she did not face Chid again. Then, a single droplet of tear fell onto the ground below.

At that moment, Chid took a step back and knelt before the Queen, reminiscent of their first encounter. The only difference was that now the girl had become the Queen, and the boy was soon to depart. Despite all this, Chid remained the same boy who desired to serve as her strength.

“...Your Majesty, I wish you well. If Kuscheperca will ever be in danger, I will immediately return to your side once more.”

“Chid-san as well. Once you return to Fremmevira, I wish you luck in your pursuit to be a splendid Knight Runner. I... will try my best not to trouble you in the future.”

Eleonora finally picked her head up. The hesitation cast away, and, in its place, Eleonora stood with the dignity and confidence fitting for the Queen. Only a single streak remained on her face.



As Eru quietly watched over the two from afar, Addy quickly came hugging from behind.

“Hey, Eru, were you thinking about leaving Chid here?” Addy asked.

“How blunt. Still, this is not something I could decide alone.”

“Then, if it’s the young master... would you be able to do something about it?!” Seeing Eru’s complicated expression, Addy turned to the nearby Emrys.

“F-fine, just leave it to me! However, the Silver Phoenix Knights technically fall under the command of my father, so I can’t arbitrarily remove a member from its roster. Let me talk with my father! If anything, I will at least figure something out.” Emrys responded confidently with his chest held high.

However, no one had ever seen Emrys lacking in confidence before.

“Rys-nii.” On the other side of the dock, Isadora called out to Emrys.

Emrys nonchalantly walked over to Isadora, only to pause his footsteps when he found Isadora’s facial expression to be particularly stiff.

“Rys-nii... Thank you for saving me, Ellie, and mom. At that moment, we really thought we were done for. We didn’t think we would ever have our kingdom back.”

“I was well taken care of by you and Auntie, so there was no way I wouldn’t come to your rescue!”

“But now, it will be up to us to rebuild our kingdom. Just leave the rest to us... Then, when everything settles down, would you come and visit?”

At her question, Isadora sounded slightly nervous. Emrys simply rubbed his chin for a moment, before turning to Isadora.

“Who knows! We are bringing quite a big present back to Fremmevira, so things will get busy back home. Either way, shouldn’t it be your turn to visit?”

Isadora’s eyes widened at Emrys’ answer, before revealing a charming smile.

“Yes. Next time, we will be sure to visit Rys-nii’s kingdom. I will do my best to stabilize the kingdom so we can visit without worry.”

“Mmn, that’s the spirit! Ah, right. When you come, I will show you how we hunt demonic beasts. After all, the west doesn’t have demonic beasts. Please look forward to it, the whole hunt... quickens the blood!”

“That won’t be necessary.” Isadora bluntly rejected his suggestion.

As everyone finished their goodbyes, the Silver Phoenix Knights boarded the Aerial Assault Ship. Under the auspices of the Kuschepercans, the Aerial Assault Ship slowly took to the skies.

“Then, Silver Phoenix Knights, time to return home... We have plenty of presents to go around once we get back!”

The Aerial Assault Ship sailed at the head of a column of ground transports. Known to be the strongest knights in the east, the Silver Phoenix Knights won a great victory in Kuscheperca, and returned home in triumph.



The Great Western Storm that started with the annexation of the Kingdom of Kuscheperca, and ended in the collapse of the Kingdom of Žaloudek, ultimately led to the flames of war to spread across the western nations. As the distrustful invaders of Žaloudek sought to partition the weakened hegemon, they inexplicably agreed to an armistice after some time.

The reason for the armistice was intricately linked to the unique technology held by Žaloudek, the highly secretive Levitate Ship and its construction.

At first, the reasonable conclusion was that the invasion brought about the spread of the Levitate Ship technology. However, how the technology made its way to the other nations remained a mystery.

Some rumors stated that Žaloudek knightsmiths caught on the losing side of a war defected with the technology. Other rumors said that the western nations developed their own Levitate Ship based on their observation of Žaloudekian Levitate Ships. There were even rumors that said it was provided by a suspicious package that circulated between the countries during the invasion.

Regardless, with the spread of the Levitate Ship technology, many nations had turned their focus to its production. The Great Western Storm had demonstrated the Levitate Ship's superiority and effectiveness in combat, making it foolish for any nation to neglect its development. After all, the initial fate of Kuscheperca had perfectly demonstrated the consequences of going to war with a technologically inferior army.

Still, beyond the regular Levitate Ship, the nations also sought after the

powerful Flying Dragon Battleship. However, the critical secrets to its construction were lost alongside the disappearance of its creator, Horacio Collazo.

In the end, they only managed to acquire the technology for constructing the Etheric Levitator and the Levitate Ship, but that alone was able to revolutionize warfare in the western nations. Without the limitations of terrain, the Levitate Ships have amplified the mobility of their armies.

As if guided along by the mysterious hand of fate, the nations soon expanded beyond the confines of Zetterlund, ushering in an escalation of the Great Western Storm.

It was a time later called the preamble to the 'Great Age of Flight'. (1)

(1) Ama-kun is a fan of Koei's games.